Readings: *Wisdom 7: 7 – 11; Ps. 89 (90): 12 – 17; Hebrews 4: 12 – 13; Mark 10: 17 – 30.*

Today's short reading from the *Letter to Hebrews* follows a long instruction in chapters 3 and 4 in which the author reminds his audience of the fate of the Israelites who were rescued from Egypt under Moses, but whose refusal to pay heed to God's word led to their loss of the promised rest by their death in the wilderness. He ends by encouraging his hearers not to follow their ancestors' example but to *strive to enter that rest, or some of you might copy this example of refusal to believe and be lost.*

The follows our reading in which the word spoken by God is likened to a double-edged sword which can find its way into any part of human nature. Like God himself his word is *alive and active,* and it is irresistible. It can *judge the secret emotions and thoughts* of everyone.

This *word of God* is on the surface so straightforward that any commentary on it would seem likely to confuse rather than help!

But there are, perhaps, points that are worth making.

We are used to hearing passages from the scriptures read to us in church – followed by the announcement *The Word of the Lord*, to which we reply *Thanks be to God.*

If we are to take today's reading seriously it imposes obligations both on those who read in church and to the rest of us.

Readers have an obligation to prepare the reading, not just for audibility but for intelligibility – and that must start by understanding the point the passage is making. If the reader doesn't understand it will be hard for the hearers to do so. Perhaps the clergy – or whoever is in charge of readers – should be 'bothered' more often to give help with this.

And the rest of us – the hearers – should pay more attention to what is read than we always do – perhaps taking the trouble to read it again later in the day to reflect on what it says to us at this particular time.

As today's reading warns there is one *to whom we must give an account of ourselves.*