



Daily reflections and prayers

(Based on the Common Worship Lectionary)



Dear friends,

Firstly, Hello! And warm greetings from St Paul's Church, and from me, Luke, the vicar.

Since we cannot meet together, we are trying to keep our sense of community and love in other ways.

Here's what we are doing:

- Recorded Morning Prayer will be uploaded every day. This is a chance for us to spend 'virtual' time together and to strengthen and encourage one another. This will include a 'Thought for the Day', and some prayers, and can be accessed via the St Paul's Facebook page, from our website stpaulschurchhook.org.uk.
- A short Communion Service will similarly be uploaded each Sunday at 9.30am. This will also include a 'Thought for the Day', and some prayers; and we invite you to prepare for this by having ready a small sip of wine or grape juice, and a small piece of bread.
- We have created a list of Church members who are particularly vulnerable, and will make sure that each one receives a phone call each week from someone in the Church. If you would prefer not to be called, please do let us know.
- We will be circulating each week these Daily reflections and prayers. These will also be uploaded to our Facebook page and to our website, and sent out via the Church email system; and for those Church members who as far as I'm aware do not have access to a computer, a printed copy will be hand delivered.

Welcome to our resources for daily Bible reading and prayer. I hope you find these helpful.

For each day I have chosen two of the set readings for that day. Some will choose to read these. Others will go straight to the verse(s) for the day, the thought for the day and the prayers. Some of course will not want to use these at all, and of course that is fine. I simply encourage you to do whatever is best for you.

This isolation that we all face will not be easy. But as I reflected upon it I was reminded of these words:

"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." (James 4v8)

Whilst I know that James addressed these words to 'sinners', I also know that this promise is true for every one of us, no matter how great or small our sin is. So perhaps over these coming weeks of relative isolation one good that can come out of it can be that you and I draw closer to our loving God.

My prayer is that these Bible reading notes will help us to do so.

God bless you,

Luke



Monday 23 March

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 25
- John 9:18-41

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, as I read your word, speak to me I pray and lead me into your truth.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Verse for the day:

Psalm 25:4-5

- ⁴ Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths.
⁵ Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour,
and my hope is in you all day long.

Reflection:

Isn't this a great way to start our week, asking God to teach us his paths and to guide us? I will certainly be starting right here.

You know, I once stopped in my car and asked a passing pedestrian the way to a place I was visiting. He immediately stuttered and stumbled, he couldn't look me in the eye, but I guess out of embarrassment he eventually mumbled some very unclear directions. Needless to say, I didn't follow them!

When we seek guidance, we need to get it from someone who actually knows the way. And that's why you and I are wisest to turn to God for guidance. He created us and he knows us; he in Christ has lived a human life, and he above all knows what is best for us.

So, this week, as we begin together with God, echo David's words and ask God to speak to you, to teach you and to guide you.

A prayer:

Loving Father, thank you that you are good and that your plans for us are always for our best. And so I pray, speak to me as I read your word; lead me in your paths and grant me the wisdom and the strength to follow you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

- Firstly, pray for your own needs and for your loved ones.
- But today, let's pray also for our Government, that God would grant them wisdom and help in these difficult days.

Daily Bible readings, reflection and prayers from St Paul's Church, Hook.



Tuesday 24 March

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 85
- Genesis 3:8-15

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, as I read your word, speak to me I pray and lead me into your truth.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Verse for the day:

Genesis 3v13

Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'
The woman said, 'The snake deceived me, and I ate.'

Reflection:

From the beginning of history we have all been faced with this challenge, whose voice am I listening to?

There are many voices and influences in our world today. We are influenced by the media, by our friends, and by the 'spirit of the age'. Indeed social media is full of so-called 'influencers' who make money out of persuading us to follow them. In fact I recently saw a video where some of these social media influencers agreed to promote arsenic-water when they were offered money for doing so. Of course, this was a trick designed to highlight the fact that many such influencers (but not all, I'm sure) will plug anything if they are paid to do so.

So we must be wise, and the question we must always ask ourselves is this: Do these people influence us for good or for ill? Do they draw me towards God and His ways, or lead me away from them?

Today, let us commit ourselves to this:

I will listen to God first and foremost; all other voices must submit to His. He alone is my guide and my light. Amen.

A prayer:

Loving Father, thank you that you are good and that your plans for us are always for our best. Help me to listen to your voice above all others, and not to be swayed by other voices that might draw me away from you. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

- Firstly, pray for your own needs and for your loved ones.
- But today, let us also pray for those working in the Health Service; for doctors, nurses and all other health care professionals.
- But let's also pray for the managers, porters, cleaners and other support staff without whom the NHS could not function.



Wednesday 25 March (Annunciation of our Lord to Mary)

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 131
- Isaiah 52:7-12

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, as I read your word, speak to me I pray and lead me into your truth.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Verse for the day:

Psalm 131v2

I have calmed myself and quietened my ambitions;
I am like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child I am content.

Reflection:

For many of us this enforced isolation will be difficult, perhaps especially for those of us who are used to being active and being around people.

But it is also an opportunity, an opportunity to use this time to draw closer to God.

David, who wrote this Psalm was a King, a singer, a warrior; he was a man of action. But he said:

"I have calmed myself...like a weaned child, I am content." Indeed, this Psalm both challenges and encourages us.

Firstly, use this time to rest in God; to calm yourself, and to discover a different pace of life. Many of us ordinarily live stressful and hectic lives. Well, during this period of social distancing and isolation, we have a rare chance to slow down, to calm ourselves and to make time to be with God.

Secondly, I was struck by David's words at the end of verse 2. *"I am like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child I am content."* This is a beautiful picture of a child who has been fed, and who as a result is full and satisfied. Here's the thing, we can feed upon God during this time and find spiritual nourishment and if we do so we will find a new contentment.

Dear friends, let us use this time to calm ourselves, to slow down, and to feed on God and his word. Amen.

A prayer:

Loving Father, thank you for this opportunity to slow down and to draw near to you. During this time of enforced separation, may we draw near to you, and be nourished by your word and your presence. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

- Firstly, pray for your own needs and for your loved ones.
- But today, let us also pray for teachers, many of whom are losing a significant portion of the Easter break and are having to continue to work.
- But let's also pray for our neighbours who, like us, face further isolation. May God be with them, and may they draw closer to God at this time.

Daily Bible readings, reflection and prayers from St Paul's Church, Hook.



Thursday 26 March

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 18:1-6
- John 10:22-30

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, as I read your word, speak to me I pray and lead me into your truth.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Verse for the day:

John 10v27

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

Reflection:

Let's set aside this isolation and this virus for a moment, and let's ask ourselves: Who do I actually follow?

Because there are many options. We can follow a particular political world-view, or a particular moral or philosophical stance. And I'm sure they all have their value.

But as Christians, we are called to be part of a different flock, one that follows Jesus above all. We are called to listen to his voice first and foremost.

Perhaps in this time of relative quiet and isolation we can rekindle our commitment to be sheep in his sheepfold, and pay particular attention to his voice.

A prayer:

Loving Father, thank you that Jesus is the good shepherd. Help us to hear his voice, to listen to him, and to follow him ever more closely. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

- Firstly, pray for your own needs and for your loved ones.
- But today, let us also pray for those who work in the food industries, the packers, the truckers, the shelf-stackers and the food servers. Suddenly we are aware of how important their role is.
- But let's also pray for the elderly who face a particular isolation. Is there someone in your street or community who you can call and offer them a friendly ear?

Daily Bible readings, reflection and prayers from St Paul's Church, Hook.



Friday 27 March

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 16
- John 11:1-7, and verses 38-44

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, as I read your word, speak to me I pray and lead me into your truth.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Verse for the day:

John 11v3

The sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is ill."

Reflection:

For Mary and Martha this was the worst of days, and so they turned to Jesus their friend. But still their brother died.

Dear friends, we all know that life can be hard and that, despite our faith, times of trouble and hardship can come to us. I guess we shouldn't be surprised at this, after all Jesus himself was crucified.

So, what can we say when life is particularly hard and difficult? Simply three things:

- God loves you. I was struck by verse 3, "Lord, the one you love is ill."
- God is with you; just as Jesus was with Mary and Martha.
- But, above all, God has a greater plan. God offers us something better than mere physical deliverance; he offers us eternal life with him.

May God comfort you with his love and his presence and, whatever you face, may you know that God holds you in his eternal hands and, at the last, he will take you home.

A prayer:

Loving Father, thank you that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. In the midst of the challenges that we face today thank you that you love us and are with us. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

- Firstly, pray for your own needs and for your loved ones.
- But today, let us also pray for those who are mourning loved ones today, for whatever reason. May God comfort them in their loss.
- Pray also for families who are struggling with kids who want to get out but can't, and who are having to undertake home schooling. May God help parents and children alike.