



Daily reflections and prayers

28 March – 3 April 2020

(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



Saturday 28 March

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 141v1-5
- John 11:17-27

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 141v1

I call to you, LORD, come quickly to me; hear me when I call to you.

Reflection:

David in Psalm 141 was in a tricky situation, subject to personal attacks and assaults (see verse 5). And so, as a person of faith he brought his troubles and his struggles to God. May we do the same. In my experience it really does help, and so I thought I'd share why I have found help in prayer.

Firstly, prayer helps me because it helps me to know that I am not alone. God is with me in whatever I face, and his presence is a comfort to me.

Secondly, prayer helps me because God's presence strengthens me. It makes a real difference. I am better able to face my situation because God gives me strength. He is "a present help in time of trouble." (Psalm 46v1).

Thirdly, prayer helps me because prayer works. Not in a simplistic way of course; indeed, I like you have known the agony of praying for something and not receiving the answer I hoped for. However, I have also had many experiences in my life when God has wonderfully answered prayer.

So, as we face the challenges of isolation, and of whatever else we face, may I encourage you to take it to the Lord in prayer. It really will make a difference.

A prayer:

Loving Father, thank you for the privilege of prayer; thank you that you hear our prayers, that you are with us, and that you do answer prayer. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

- Firstly, pray for your own needs and for your loved ones.
- But today, let us also pray for those who are working to find a cure for this virus. May God bless their efforts.
- Pray also for those around the world facing the challenge of this virus in the midst of poverty. Whilst it is of course hard for us here in the UK, many around the world face even greater challenges.

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



Sunday 29 March (Passiontide begins)

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 30
- Lamentations 3:19-33

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:

Lamentations 3:22-23

- ²² Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Reflection:

These really are great truths for us this Sunday:

God's love (his compassion) never fails. You can rely always on the steadfast love of the Lord. Others may fail you, but God's love never fails. So, whatever you may face today know that God does care, he does have compassion, and that love never fails. There is no compassion fatigue with God.

His love is new every morning. So that includes this morning. Therefore today, you will receive a fresh delivery on God's love. Receive it now. And of course, you will receive another delivery tomorrow, and the next day, and every day that lies ahead.

Great is God's faithfulness. You can rely on God and his steadfast love. Let us thank God for this truth.

A prayer:

Loving Father, thank you that you are loving, steadfast and faithful. Thank you that we can trust in you and in your love. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

- Firstly, pray for your own needs and for your loved ones.
- But today, let us also pray for our Government, that God would grant them wisdom and help as they make difficult decisions. May God guide them as they lead us in these difficult days.

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



Monday 30 March

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 27v1-5
- John 8:1-11

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 27v1

The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?

Reflection:

Of course, we are all too aware that we live in challenging times. Today I walked an elderly neighbour down to the local shops, and we were queuing outside the chemist, and then again outside each shop, standing six feet apart from each other as we waited our turn to be allowed inside. And even when we got into Tesco's we were nervously scuttling past the few other shoppers that were there, many of them with face-masks or scarves covering their mouths. These are strange times, living in fear of our neighbours and of each other.

But they reveal an important truth to us, that many of the things that we trusted in in the past are suddenly falling away or can no longer be trusted.

But in the midst of all this, one thing and one thing alone stands firm and forever trustworthy, and that is the love of God. He will never leave you nor forsake you, and nothing can take you out of his hand.

A prayer:

Loving Father, in these changing times when so many past assurances crumble away, we thank you that you and your love remain certain and sure. We put our trust in you today. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

- Firstly, pray for your own needs and for your loved ones.
- But today, let's pray also for those who are struggling with isolation. May God reassure them with the reality of his presence.
- And thank God for all the acts of kindness and care for others that are manifesting in our society.

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



Tuesday 31 March

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 33 v 1-9
- John 11v45-57

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 33v1

Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;
It is fitting for the upright to praise him.

Reflection:

There have been a number of videos posted on Facebook and Youtube in recent days of people singing, dancing and having fun. This is wonderful. It lifts our spirits and brings joy to our hearts.

So let us, as Christians, join this somewhat counter-intuitive spirit of celebration by singing to God songs of praise. Whether you prefer traditional hymns or modern worship songs may I encourage you to join the Psalmist and to "sing joyfully to the LORD." Turn on a CD, or your music player, or head to YouTube and select some songs of worship.

Because God is worthy of our praise and because, as you worship Him, you will find that it lifts your own heart and blesses you as well.

A prayer:

Loving Father, we thank you for your love, and we worship you as our creator and our God. And so we lift to you our songs and our words of worship. 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 1 April

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 119 v 33-40
- John 12v1-11

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 12v3

Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Reflection:

What I love about this story is that Mary couldn't do much to help Jesus, but she did what she could. She expressed her love for him by anointing his feet and wiping them with her hair.

Thinking upon this made me ask myself this question: What can I do to show Jesus my love for him? Perhaps I could worship him in song. Or perhaps worship with my words. Or perhaps with my life, by turning from a particular sin or bad habit? Or perhaps I can express my love for him by committing myself to a regular time of Bible reading and prayer?

Why not take a few moments today to follow the example of Mary, and to find something that you can do to express your love for God and for his son Jesus Christ.

A prayer:

Loving Father, you sent your son Jesus into this world to live for us and to die for us. Thank you. Help me to express my love for you today and in the coming days. 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 2 April

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 42
- John 12v12-19

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 42v1

As the deer pants for streams of water,
So my soul pants for you, my God.

Reflection:

What is your heart's desire? What do you really want out of life? A bigger house? A career change? A new relationship? Or perhaps something more admirable? Perhaps what you long for is better health, or some blessing for a loved one. Most of us, almost without realising it, have dreams and wishes that subtly direct our lives.

But the Psalmist in Psalm 42 is very clear about his passion; his passion was for God.

'As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.' (Psalm 42v1). I found this quite challenging. To be honest I couldn't say the same thing; could you? It's very rare indeed for someone to be so sold-out for God that he is their absolute passion.

But the challenge of this Psalm is exactly that. I must move God to the top of my list, and perhaps this period of relative isolation is an opportunity for me to begin to do so.

May we like the psalmist, long for God above all. There is no higher calling, and no more worthy passion.

A prayer:

Loving Father, ignite in me such a fire for you, that you become my first love, my passion, and my greatest desire. 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 3 April

The selected lectionary readings for today are:

- Psalm 31v1-5
- John 12v20-36a

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 12v27

Jesus said: "It was for this very reason I came to this hour."

Reflection:

It is an amazing thing to reflect upon, that Jesus accepted the cross and the suffering of his crucifixion willingly. Indeed, as he reminds us here, it was for this very reason that Jesus came into this world -to die for us so that we can be forgiven.

It's a truly astonishing act of selfless love, and one from which we all benefit.

As Jesus said elsewhere, "Greater love has no one than this, to lay down his life for his friends."
(John 15v13).

Well, we are privileged to be counted as his friends and as beneficiaries of his great sacrifice.

As we approach Holy Week, let us never forget these wonderful truths.

A prayer:

Loving Father, thank you that Jesus came into this world to die for us and to pay for our sins. Thank you for such amazing love for 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.