

## Some thoughts to start...

Engaging in the practice of faith is not always easy. For some people, sitting down and having an open, in-depth chat with God is not difficult. For many of us, however, it is.

What we're trying to do here is to give people a resource – to help them in their thinking about scripture, and in the practice of personal prayer.

Everything written here is simply a *suggestion*. If you find other practices more helpful, please use them!

Find a bible and head to a place you won't be disturbed. Take a few moments to sit quietly. In that quiet moment you might want to say to God, "What would you like me to hear today?"

Read each of the scriptures. Some people prefer to read silently, while others find it more helpful to read out loud. Take a few moments to reflect on what you've heard. (If you would like, the 'reflection' section is there to help start you off.)

Finally, take a few moments to talk with God. The printed prayer is there as a guide, but there may be other things you want to share. Chat, as openly and honestly as you can. Then, through the day, listen for God's response.

**This resource was initiated by St. Andrew's Haney United Church, Maple Ridge, BC.**

The suggested scripture readings are based on the Consultation on Common Text's *Daily Lectionary*.

If you'd like to share some thoughts about what you've read, head over to the 'chat space' at [www.standrewsuc.com](http://www.standrewsuc.com)

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### ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

## Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(November 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

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## Monday

### Scripture:

- Habakkuk 2.12-20
- Psalm 142
- 1 Corinthians 5.9-13

### Reflection:

What is one to think when a personal, national God seems to be letting others get the upper hand? It is not exactly "Why do bad things happen to good people?" but its corollary "Why do good things happen to bad people(s)?" and it's a question for the ages.

Habakkuk answers that wicked nations will eventually get what's coming to them. The psalmist assures God that God will deal kindly with him (her?) in the end. Paul seems to suggest that if we can keep out the wicked (sexually immoral in this case) we will be able to protect ourselves from falling into their ways. In effect, this suggests that we bring evil onto ourselves.

All of these ideas persist today. And so does the idea that things happen with neither rhyme nor reason nor divine intervention. How do you find God in both the good times and the bad? Is it easier to trust God's faithfulness in the good or the bad? Do we seem God punishing more than rewarding? Or vice versa?

### Prayer:

God of it all, I know that you are with me always. Help me to trust in your faithfulness, and in your love for me. And help me to remember that you are also with others – friends, strangers and even enemies, loving them and being faithful to them as much as me.

Today, I remember and pray for \_\_\_\_\_,  
friends blessed by your love and compassion.

For your grace,  
with your love,  
and in Christ's name, I pray.

## Tuesday

### Scripture:

- Habakkuk 3.1-16
- Psalm 142
- Jude 5-21

### Reflection:

Here, we are offered a few more thoughts on what happens to those who are not onside with God. It reminds, especially the prayer of Habbakuk, of those monarchs, generals and coaches who pray mightily that God is on their side and will lead them to victory against the other team, while the opposing monarch, general or coach prays just as confidently that God does and will favour them.

I have not seen the movie Elizabeth: the Golden Age, but my recollection of history classes suggests that this type of prayer was part of the English preparation to take on the Spanish Armada (and likely Spain's as well). I am just as sure that it is part of the U.S.'s ongoing war in Iraq and Al Qaeda's war against the U.S.

It is easy to want God on our side. It is less easy to remember that God is not just our puppet or sugar daddy, giving us what we want.

### Prayer:

Giving God, thank you for your love and support. Thank you that I can call on you in times of need and know that you hear me. Help me to be mindful that others do the same and you are not there to grant my wishes but to make sure I remember that others are also your children and you love us all and weep for our selfishness.

Today, I remember and pray for \_\_\_\_\_,  
friends blessed by your love and compassion.

For your grace,  
with your love,  
and in Christ's name, I pray.

## Wednesday

### Scripture:

- Habakkuk 3.17-19
- Psalm 142
- Luke 19.11-27

### Reflection:

This seems like a strange parable for the Gospel of Luke who tends to hold up the marginalized and overlooked: women, Samaritans, the poor, the lost. But – he told it because people were expecting the kingdom of God to appear immediately. Presumably Jesus knows that this is not how things are going to work out, and by the time this gospel was written Luke did too.

So the message is to those who decide that they don't want to get on board for the kingdom either because it's taking too long or it's not what they're interested in, and it's for those who are interested in it, but who – over time – become entrenched, battering down the hatches to protect what's theirs.

And those who are praised for their work are those who do not lose sight of the goal (the kingdom of God) but do not lose their part of the world either. They are out there working for the day when the kingdom does come.

Where are we in this? Are we working? Protecting ourselves? Avoiding the whole thing? Washing our hands of it because we have a better idea?

### Prayer:

Loving parent who art in heaven, we pray "thy kingdom come". May I live out that prayer in my living. It is slow in coming and I'm not sure it will be what I expect but I pray it anyways: thy kingdom come.

Today I remember and pray for \_\_\_\_\_,  
friends blessed by your love.

For your grace,  
with your love,  
and in Christ's name, I pray.

## Thursday

### Scripture:

- Zechariah 1.1-17
- Psalm 145.1-5, 17-21
- Acts 22.22-23.11

### Reflection:

I like to watch the various Law & Order programmes on television. One of the themes that often comes up is whether or not the end can ever justify the means. Paul argues that he cannot be harmed because he was born a Roman citizen and is therefore superior to most including the tribune who has ordered him flogged. He is also beyond prosecution because he is a Pharisee. Others, whom he had recruited, do not have these protections and can be flogged, insulted and torn to pieces.

Is Paul being a hypocrite? Or is he being practical and pragmatic? He does, after all, take great risks – greater risks than many of the Christ-followers of his day. He also gets great results: many people are baptized and come to believe and receive the Holy Spirit because of him.

This reading is associated with a Psalm of God's Providence and a reassuring prophesy. Perhaps there is a message here that God does not expect more than we are able to give. And perhaps there is a message that it's okay for us to take what measures we can to keep ourselves safe. As for the end justifying the means – I'm not so sure.

### Prayer:

God, who watches over me, you are just, you are gracious, you are good. Your deeds are awesome. I will tell others what you have done and I will know that you are with me. Amen.

Today, I remember and pray for \_\_\_\_\_,  
friends blessed by your love and compassion.

For your grace,  
with your love,  
and in Christ's name, I pray.

## Friday

### Scripture:

- Zechariah 6.9-15
- Psalm 145.1-5, 17-21
- Acts 24.10-23

### Reflection:

Paul seems to be on trial because of his belief in the resurrection. He still offers sacrifices as his ancestors did. He is generous to the poor (which no religion finds fault with) and he participates in ceremonies in the Temple. I think that there is a little more to it than that, but whether the dead might be raised to life seems to be the major bone of contention here.

Which is strange because by now most people believe in some kind of life after death in which we are reunited with loved ones and get the chance to argue with or express our admiration for various historical figures. We don't necessarily think of it in terms of "raised to life" or in terms of judgement, and we do have all kinds of ideas about people becoming angels and/or watching us from clouds. After my father died, there were times when I had to firmly tell myself that he wouldn't actually be watching all the time, even if there were times when I wanted and expected him to be.

Today the Christian belief in the resurrection doesn't raise too many hackles, but other beliefs seem at odd with cultural norms. Which of your beliefs are the hardest to live with or by these days?

### Prayer:

God of life and death, we are grateful for all the ways we can blend in. Help us to have the courage to stand up and stand out when we need to. Amen.

Today, I remember and pray for \_\_\_\_\_,  
friends blessed by your love and compassion.

For your grace,  
with your love,  
and in Christ's name, I pray.

## Saturday

### Scripture:

- Haggai 1.1-15a
- Psalm 145.1-5, 17-21
- Luke 20.1-8

### Reflection:

In the midst of explaining why harvests have failed and everything is barren, there is a nugget of useful instruction: you have taken care of yourselves, and ignored God. You have built fancy houses, but done nothing about the temple. And that's why, says God, the harvest is poor: if you aren't being responsible with what you have, you won't be given anything. It's the principle of first fruits: first give to God, who has, after all, given you what you have.

The church is sometimes condemned for talking too much about money. "The church is always asking for money," is a complaint I've heard too often. But Jesus spoke more about money than anything else. And today, we have more interest in money and possessions that – perhaps – at any other time. We measure our worth by incomes and what we can buy. We compare what we have to what others have. How can the question of money be any less important today?

But money is not the only thing we are called on to share. Faith is another. Jesus taught and was challenged: "who gave you the right to teach us?" they asked him. Do you feel like you have the authority to go out and share your faith? In some contexts, but not others? Where do we get that authority from?

### Prayer:

Generous God, I thank for the ways in which I can be generous: with my time, with my wealth, with my caring, with my faith. Give me the sense of authority that helps me discern when and where I can share that faith. Amen.

Today, I remember and pray for \_\_\_\_\_,  
friends blessed by your love and compassion.

For your grace,  
with your love  
In Christ's name I pray.