

## 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 and their minister, the Rev. Richard Bott.**

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

ST. ANDREW'S HANEY  
UNITED CHURCH

## Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(May 26<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008)

WRITER FOR THIS WEEK:  
Rev. Gary Gaudin, Minister  
South Arm United Church  
Richmond, BC

ST. ANDREW'S HANEY  
UNITED CHURCH

22165 Dewdney Trunk Road  
Maple Ridge, BC V2X 3H7

Phone: 604.463.9611  
Email: standrewshaneyuc@telus.net  
Web: standrewsuc.com

## Monday

### Scripture:

- Deuteronomy 32.1-14
- Psalm 104
- Hebrews 10.32-39

### Reflection:

At the heart of these passages is an understanding of God that can not be too often stated: God seeks an ever deeper relationship with us. Why? That's a question only God can answer. All we can do is explore the contours of that relationship which God values so much that Jesus becomes its living embodiment. In Deuteronomy we encounter the One who, no matter how fickle we can be, can never reciprocate in kind. God can only and always be faithful and loving to us. The Psalm is a wonderful expression of the psalmist's awareness of God's ongoing care of creation and delightfully plays with much of the language of the creation stories. The writer of the Hebrews passage speaks as one who has known great hardship in the walk of faith, who has come not to expect God's rescue from distress, but God's steadfast companionship in the midst of distress. Those who follow Christ, then, are called to love out that same steadfast, companionship love for individuals and for all of creation. That's a challenging road for us to journey. God seeks an ever deeper relationship with us. What do we seek with God? Or with each other? Just think of the epidemic of loneliness which is such a large reality in our faith communities. Can it be that we might deepen our relationship with the Creator as we speak a word of comfort to the hearts breaking in loneliness?

### Prayer:

Holy Companion, each day you bring into our lives opportunities to care for one another and all creation. Strengthen my spirit today so that I may be enabled to reach out with your love and willingly walk with others. I pray in the strong and loving name of Jesus, amen.

## Tuesday

### Scripture:

- 1 Kings 17.1-16
- Psalm 104
- 1 Corinthians 4.6-21

### Reflection:

There's a tiny vignette with which this part of the story about Elijah the Tishbite begins that sometimes receives little attention. Elijah understands himself to be directed by God to a remote place for fasting and prayer - so remote, it seems, that only the ravens can find him and deliver the sustenance of life. I often find myself so caught up in life that the idea of hiving off to a remote spot for prayer and fasting seems attractive. But I never do it. I actually could arrange my schedule differently and create the time to do so, but no matter how longingly I look at the possibility, I never do it. Is there something in this vignette for us to consider? From this remote place Elijah understands God to send him to a poor widow in Zaraphath. To this point in Elijah's story we have encountered the rich and the powerful, who have no sense of the huge challenges their poorest subjects face. The former feast and fight for glory, the latter, in times of famine, watch their supplies dwindle to nothingness and prepare to die. As uncomfortable as it is, is not this text calling us to a fresh awareness of where we sit on the continuum of wealth and poverty, of feast and famine? Doesn't this story feel like an "admonishment" of the type mentioned in the Corinthians passage?

### Prayer:

Creator, it can't have been your intent to make poverty a way of life for millions of your children, can it? It can't have been your will that millions of our younger brothers and sisters die each week from lack of the necessities of life, can it? But if not your intent, your will, then whose? Please, Holy One, continue to work in me that I may be one who gives in the name of Jesus, and takes less in the name of Self. Amen.

## Wednesday

### Scripture:

- Isaiah 66.7-13
- Psalm 104
- Luke 12.22-31

### Reflection:

Waaaaay back, we began to explore our language for God, wondering just why it was that the God who made both male and female in God's own image was overwhelmingly a "He" God in the language of the institutional church. Passages such as this one in Isaiah were a key in our on-going recovery of a more faithful, more biblical, more diverse understanding of God. Are we offended any longer by this imagery of a mothering God? One hopes not. But the idea of God breast-feeding God's people at "her glorious bosom" (v. 11) may yet be uncomfortable for some of us. There is nothing wrong with being uncomfortable with biblical imagery and/or language. God often uses that very uncomfortable-ness as a way to launch us on a new path, or at least a revised path to the one on which we had been walking so very comfortably for so long. As Luke's Jesus reminds us, the goal in our journey is first and foremost the realm of God, a realm of justice and compassion and hope for *all* of God's children.

### Prayer:

You call us, God who is above and beyond and beneath all our best images and thoughts, to worship you with wholeness of life and thought. Sometimes we confuse worshipping you with certain words said on Sunday, so let your Spirit work within us to understand that as we stand for justice, we are worshipping you; as we stand for compassion, we are worshipping you; as we stand for respect, we are worshipping you; whether that happens on Sunday or any other moment of our week. Amen.

## Thursday

### Scripture:

- Genesis 1.1-2.4a
- Psalm 46
- Romans 2.17-29

### Reflection:

In the midst of a turbulent period of political and religious unrest in 16th century Europe, Martin Luther seized upon the words of Psalm 46 and saw in them a word of hope for God's people, crafting a hymn which we still sing, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." It's no accident that Psalm 46 came to Luther's mind: not only did he teach the Psalms during his career as an Augustinian monk, he knew that this Psalm was written to address a moment when it seemed like everything was in chaos. At the heart of life, there is the presence of God, creating and creative, at work. This faith statement also undergirds the formation of the creation stories in Genesis before us. Before God's Spirit took action, all was chaos, a total mess. Only God's Spirit can take the mess we create of things, and once again create something which bears fruit for all of God's children. By our words and actions at any given moment, we are creating more chaos which God will have to undo, or contributing to God's creative endeavours at re-forming a more fruitful world for all of God's children. Just because we wear the name "Christian" or "follower of Jesus" doesn't exempt us from the needful awareness of what our words or deeds are likely to accomplish.

### Prayer:

God, as far as I am able, I want to open up my heart and mind to a fuller awareness of how my words and actions affect the faith journey of others. Help me to speak words of comfort or challenge, but not censure. Help me to act with compassion and acceptance, not disrespect. Help me to be part of your creative work in weaving your world toward health. I ask it in Jesus' name.

## Friday

### Scripture:

- Genesis 2.4b-25
- Psalm 46
- Romans 9.6-13

### Reflection:

Whereas the first creation story (which we read yesterday) seeks to place the creation of humanity within the grand scheme of creation, this story is far more focused on the creation of humanity. God, rather than creating through the Word, creates like a master artisan, fashioning and shaping the clay into which God breathes Life. There is a more intimate connection between Creator and created here, and a more intimate connection between man and woman. Human beings are created to be in community with each other in this story, created in such a way as to be equals of each other. That's what lies behind the term (v. 18) "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." No matter that generations of the church have understood the role of the "helper" in this story is not based on a relationship of subordination: the Hebrew means us to read here a relationship of mutuality, one of interdependence. At the very beginning of our scriptures there is an understanding of the male-female relationship which is still struggling to be heard by the Church. Two questions for reflection today: (1) Do I treat the men and women with whom I share my life as full partners in God's work? (2) Are there areas of my life to which I must pay more attention in terms of my commitment to mutuality?

### Prayer:

Relationships are hard, loving God. Hard to maintain, hard to grow, hard to live into. Yet my life is filled with relationships. Perhaps there is something important you want to teach me today through these relationships. Help me to be a gracious learner, in Jesus name. Amen.

## Saturday

### Scripture:

- Genesis 3.1-24
- Psalm 46
- Matthew 7.1-6

### Reflection:

We do not need to believe in the Garden of Eden story in order to recognize that God's truth is waiting for us in this wonderful old folk tale. That truth has been phrased many different ways over the centuries, but each is a response to the question: Why is there sin in God's creation? The answer has to do with the nature of God's creation itself: in Jewish thought, God created so as not to be alone. God sought community, and creation was God's way of achieving that community. Since genuine relationship requires the freedom to choose the height and depth and width of that relationship, human beings are given the freedom to choose. And human beings sometimes choose to use their freedom to wreak havoc on one another, rather than to participate with God in the mending of the world. Note, too, as the story progresses, that even as human beings chose a path that sets them in opposition to their Creator, their Creator seeks them out, engages them in conversation, offers them an alternative way. That is God's way. It's the good news of Jesus even before Jesus. Can this be the background to Matthew's Jesus words about not judging others??

### Prayer:

God, there is so much about your grace and your love that we'll never grasp. So be it. Help us to seek not so much to grasp your grace and love today, as to be grasped by it. And to share that grasp with others in Jesus name. Amen.