

Suggested Bible readings for 25th – 31st March

Please use these suggestions, notes, and questions if they are helpful in your own prayer and study time. Dom will be streaming Morning Prayer on Youtube every day except Sundays at 8am – do join him if this would be beneficial to you.

The readings can all be found on the Bible Gateway website if you don't have access to a Bible:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/>

Wednesday 25th March

Readings:

- Psalm 111
- 1 Samuel 2:1-10
- Romans 5:12-21

Brief reflection:

Psalm 111 tells of how gracious and compassionate the Lord is, at all times and in all ways. He gives food to those who fear him (v5), and shows power to his people (v6). At a time of panic buying and shortages of some foods and products, it is good to be reminded of the truth that all things come from God, and that he is the source of our life and being. He is gracious and compassionate. He shows us truth and justice (v7), and he offers us redemption (v9). All this begins and ends with God – not us, or our circumstances. It is obvious that people often make mistakes, and don't act in ways which are sensible or wise. We can see that all around us now. But the Psalmist points the way: "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (v10).

Prayer for the day:

Lord, teach us to fear only you.

In this time of darkness and despair, we look around and see the brokenness of the world.

Help us to love you, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Help us praise you, and remember your grace and compassion.

Amen.

Food for thought:

- What does it mean to fear the Lord?
- Where can we see God's grace and compassion at work today?

Thursday 26th March

Readings:

- Psalm 53
- Exodus 4:27-6:1
- Hebrews 10:19-25

Brief reflection:

It's hard to see how we can stay true to Hebrews 10:25 at the moment. "Don't neglect meeting together, as is the habit of some." This is impossible at a time of social distancing and isolation. Our churches are closed for public worship, prayer gatherings, and even for personal prayer. How can we continue to meet together? Well, one way is through our weekly service sheet – sent out with the same email that you received this with. On Sunday at 10:30, you can join with others as we say these words together – and, if you have the internet, you can watch Dom leading the service live on YouTube, too. But this isn't quite the same, and we all know that. It's hard. But the writer of Hebrews doesn't just tell us to meet together – they also ask us to provoke one another to love and good deeds. These can continue even now. Let's work together to love each other and the world during this time, and to show that love with actions where we can.

Prayer for the day:

Lord, help us to love you.

Even at this time of distancing and separation,

help us to be your people. Help us to be your body.

Help us to show your love for everyone in our actions and prayers.

Amen.

Food for thought:

- What can you do today to show love to those around you?
- What can you do today to provoke love and good deeds in others at this time?

Friday 27th March

Readings:

- Psalm 102
- Exodus 6:2-13
- Hebrews 10:26-end

Brief reflection:

The passage from Exodus today reminds us that God is saviour. He hears the groaning and cries of his people, and he responds by liberating them. The Egyptians were subjecting the Israelites to tremendous persecution and oppression, and for those people it must have been a very dark time indeed. A time without light, or hope. But even in such times as these, God is at work, raising people up, overcoming injustice, liberating captives, and bringing redemption to the world.

Prayer for the day:

Lord, help us to see you.

We live in dark times.

Show us your light, and give us your freedom we pray.

Amen.

Food for thought:

- Imagine being an Israelite under the oppression of the Egyptians. How would you have felt? How would you have responded?
- What parallels are there to our story today?
- What differences are there?

Saturday 28th March

Readings:

- Psalm 32
- Exodus 7:8-end
- Hebrews 11:1-16

Brief reflection:

Faith is so important. We have faith in all sorts of things. Sometimes those things hardly seem like faith at all: when we drop an apple, we can have faith that it will fall. Some things are little bit less assured, but still easy to have faith in: we have faith that our family will show us love; or we have faith that our income will arrive each month. Some things are much harder to have faith in: for example, our Prime Minister has asked us to have faith in the government's guidance on the virus, but many people have been ignoring this guidance. Faith in human nature is sometimes hard to hold onto, especially when we witness panic buying.

In Hebrews 11, we learn that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." It's not always easy to have faith in God, especially when we can't seem to see or feel him at work. But we can have faith nonetheless: he is a place for us to hide in; the one who preserves us from trouble (Psalm 32:8).

Prayer for the day:

Lord, give us faith in you.

We admit that we sometimes can't see or feel you at work.

Help us to believe in you even when it's difficult.

Help us to trust you even when we're scared.

Amen.

Food for thought:

- What things do you have faith in?
- Do you find it easy to have faith in God? Why, or why not?

Sunday 29th March

Readings:

- Psalm 86
- Jeremiah 31:27-37
- John 12:20-33

Brief reflection:

Jesus tells us that unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a single grain. If it falls and dies, it will bear much fruit. The world as we know it seems to be falling to the ground and dying: everything is coming to an end, and there is fear everywhere. None of us know when, or how, this will all end: or what will happen afterwards. There is, as they keep saying on the news, no exit strategy.

I wonder whether we are going through a time of new beginnings. Sometimes things have to fall away and be reborn. I wonder what in our lives will change for the better as we come through this time together? What is God going to do with the grains that are falling to the ground right now? These are dark times, but they are also exciting times of new opportunities and potential growth.

Prayer for the day:

Lord, help us to let go of the thing which need to fall.

Help us to trust you, that as things seem to end and fail,
we will see and know growth and new fruit in the future.

Help us to trust you, Lord, we pray.

Amen.

Food for thought:

- How have you responded to some of the things ending recently? How have your responses surprised you?
- What opportunities do you think there might be for new beginnings after this crisis?

Monday 30th March

Readings:

- Psalm 121
- Exodus 8:1-19
- Hebrews 11:17-31

Brief reflection:

We need to remember Psalm 121 in these times. Where does our help come from? It comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

All of us rely on human knowledge and ingenuity in all sorts of ways. When you start a car, the turn of the key fires electrons and mechanical sparks alike, which work together in incredibly complex ways to move you along. When you turn on your cooker, you're relying on a whole network of detailed elements: from the extraction of the fossil fuels or the harnessing of solar power; to the metallurgy involved in making pipes; to satellite technology which guides the satnav of the delivery driver, and on and on and on. People are incredibly clever, and our technology and science is sophisticated and wonderful.

But, at times such as these, we need to ask ourselves: "from where is my help to come?"

Prayer for the day:

Lord, lead us to rely only on you.

Thank you for the myriad ways in which human ingenuity has helped us.

Help us now to remember that all good things come from you.

Help us to lift our eyes up.

Help us to see you.

Amen.

Food for thought:

- What things will you rely on today, and where do they come from?
- How can you become more reliant on God, the source of all our help?

Tuesday 31st March

Readings:

- Psalm 123
- Exodus 8:20-end
- Hebrews 11:32-12:2

Brief reflection:

Hebrews teaches us that, even when times are hard, we should persevere in our faith. The author talks about running the race that is set before us. People who run in races don't run aimlessly – rather, they run towards a set goal. Hebrews makes it very clear what our goal is, or rather who – Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. As we run towards him, we can hold lightly to those things around us which seek to draw us back or set us off course – it is Jesus that we live for, Jesus that we aim towards, Jesus who is our rock and foundation and beginning and end. It's all about him.

Prayer for the day:

Lord Jesus, thank you.

Thank you for the incarnation: for coming to be with us.

Thank you for your ministry: for showing us the kingdom.

Thank you for your passion: for holding us in love.

Thank you for the cross.

Thank you for rescuing us, and setting us free, and putting us on a new path.

Help us to run for you.

Amen.

Food for thought:

- What are you aiming for in your life?
- What is distracting you from God?