

February Readings and Reflections

Monday 1st February

Hosea 9:1-7

Well what a difficult reading to start our daily thoughts and to start the week with too! The people of Israel were on their own particularly destructive path taking them in the opposite direction to God. Hosea would not be a candidate for the diplomatic service; he pulls no punches as he warns them of the dire consequences. Have you ever watched a friend or family member embark on a terrible course? The Bible is not always an easy read but it reflects God's desire to save and call people back from the brink.

David Gray 07540 620632

Tuesday 2nd February

Exodus 13:1-10

Two thoughts dominate this passage, the "firstborn" and "consecration". They are central to commemorating the greatest event in Israel's history, the Exodus, when through Moses, God rescues his people from the slavery of Egypt. How does this operate? Well in Ancient Culture generally, the first-born is the most precious of your children and to consecrate, set them apart for God, was the most profound expression of gratitude. (Cf. Hannah, Samson's mother and indeed Mary). For the Christian, the new Israel, freed by God from slavery to the Self, the most profound expression of thanks is **not** the *giving* but the *receiving* of Jesus, God's firstborn as Saviour and Lord, set apart, to live and reign in us.

Wullie Docherty

Wednesday 3rd February

Psalms 119:1-11

Psalms 119 stands as the giant among the psalms. Almost every verse mentions God's Word. These verses encourage us to fill our minds with God's teaching and His ways to live. How do you feel if you don't eat regularly? Lack of nourishment will affect us physically, mentally and emotionally. But do we realise that we can starve ourselves spiritually too? Our food for this is God's Word - the healthiest food there is. Fill up with this kind of nourishment and there is no room for anything unhealthy, like ungodly thoughts, selfish actions and even debilitating feelings. Isn't this why Jesus calls Himself "the Bread of Life"?

Rev. Linda

Thursday 4th February

Psalms 15

"The Lord remembers us and will bless us" (v12)

We're living in times where it feels like a big red "stop, reset" button has been pressed. Certainty has been replaced with the unknown. Provision and reliability of many trusted sources/relationships/organisations has been shaken to the core. But in the midst of this shaking, the Psalmist reminds us to look up to God, to put our trust in Him. God is our provider – our "all in all". He breathed life into us, provided a planet for humankind to live in and in complete loving faithfulness continues to look after all who put their trust in Him. Just as a mother cannot forget her new born child, precious and loved, so God does not forget us. Each child of God is precious to Him and it is He that will bless us. Glory to God. Praise the Lord!

Jenni P

Friday 5th February

Psalm 19

The end of another hectic week! The psalm challenges us to know God by knowing His Word and responding to it by personal introspection (reflection and correct reaction).

Reading it left me with two thoughts?

19:7-11 -- Do I consider God's Word; His commandments and judgements as offering me all the security I need and so make time to read it? Are the words and instruction in the bible better than money, (gold) in the bank (external security) and sweeter than honey in the mouth for me?

19:14 -- Do I allow His Word to challenge me and bring change and transformation in my life, spiritually cleansing me and allowing me to become more Christ like and conformed to His image?

Dilys

Saturday 6th February

Psalm 23

"He restores my soul" My Shepherd doesn't just care for my physical health, but also my mental and emotional condition. I'm so grateful that - even in lockdown – God can keep me in peace and calmness. Fear, depression and anxiety can go away; my Shepherd protects me and restores my soul. My job is simply to stay close, tell Him what's bothering me and take a rest from all my cares and concerns. As Betty ten Boom said '**Don't wrestle, nestle**' – that, I can do!

Peter S

Sunday 7th February

Psalm 29

Wow, what a wonderful description of the power of God! Verses 3-9 we see David doing everything he can do emphasise the power of God. In v5 talking about the cedar tree, the cedar trees in this part of the world are well known for their size & strength, so to try and describe the power of God, David is saying even a thunderbolt toppling a mighty cedar – our God is stronger than that! But he ends by saying, *God brings peace – we can be confident that He will bless us with peace, and the strength of God comes as a comfort, not a storm.*

Peter M

Monday 8th February

Psalm 30

Today's psalm gives words to feelings that lots of us are currently having. We are sad, and angry, grieving and begging. We are currently experiencing huge loss and things seem bleak. Our God is big enough to handle these feelings – some of which are likely aimed at Him, and if we share these with Him, he not only *can* and *will* create something beautiful in the midst of it all; but He already is. Today, allow yourself to feel whatever you need to feel, remind yourself that these responses are acceptable, and look around and see where God is creating beauty in the midst of the chaos and heartache.

Frankie

Tuesday 9th February

Psalm 36

'My God is faithful, my God is powerful, and my God is in charge! (Miss Clara's kitchen table mantra, from the film 'The War Room').

As Christians it is good to know that we can trust in our God of faithfulness, of power and sovereignty. We are trusting in Him and His word, not relying on our own ways of thinking, especially during days like today, days dominated by Covid -19.

Our thoughts are very powerful, as they often lead us into action, as the psalmist witnesses, 'the words of his mouth are trouble and deceit, he's left off having insight, doing good'.

The faithlessness of our words leads us astray, away from doing good. Let us be watchful over our words, let us remain faithful as our God is faithful.

Viv

Wednesday 10th February**Psalm:34 1-14**

As a primary aged child I was encouraged to learn certain scriptures off by heart. At one point the above verses were given to me to memorise as part of a competition where I had to recite 144 verses from the Bible to get a free place at church camp. I did get the free place and will be forever grateful to the Godly woman who encouraged me to hide God's word in my heart. When trials and tribulations have come my way, I have remembered these words.

I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise will continually be in my mouth. Hopefully during this awful time you will be able to recite the above and many more of His words.

Joyce D

Thursday 11th February**Psalm 37:1-11**

The writer of Psalm 37:1-11 encourages his people to refrain from envy, to do good and put trust in the Lord rather than be envious of those who do wrong but prosper. As a police officer I was among people who gained through dishonesty, abuse of power and self gratification. But their gain was invariably at a price, even if they were never prosecuted because selfishness, falsehood and theft always damage personal relationships and self worth. Jesus expressed this neatly in his Beatitudes in which he reverses the values of the world, offering hope and comfort for all who are alone, depressed and hurting. Check out Matthew Chapter 5 for an inspiring, uplifting and comforting read.

Barry Stewart 07789004175

Friday 12th February**Psalm 31:1-12, 23-24**

It seems that the writer of this psalm has had a rubbish time. He is feeling abandoned, alone and forgotten. We can feel like this too at times, especially difficult times such as we are experiencing at the moment. But within his distress and anguish the writer knows he can turn to God who is ever faithful

He cries out to God whom he relies upon as his rock and strong fortress and he places his hope in Him. As a child of God you are never alone; place your hope in Him today – He is with you always, your rock and your strong fortress.

Liz Allen

Saturday 13th February**Psalm 42**

Living in a "Green and pleasant land" we underestimate the value of water. Israel is a dry country, so the writer of the Psalm would have seen thirsty animals panting as they searching for water. This is more than looking for a cool stream for a hot day paddle. Finding water, meant that life, but failure meant death in a couple of days. The writer compares his longing for God to a thirsty animal searching for water that would make the difference between life and death. Similarly, without God, we will die spiritually. We need to 'pant' for 'the water of God', that brings everlasting life. We find God in prayer, worship and the Bible – so let us drink deeply and often.

John Brierley

Sunday 14th February**Psalm 150**

There is no doubt in the mind of the writer of this Psalm! We should all praise God with all we have, for all he has done. This can be difficult. As much as we often proclaim our faith and love of God, at times faith is challenging. Yet even in these difficult moments – we are still called to praise.

My wise and beautiful wife has said (many times), that she always loves me – but doesn't always like me. I've taken to calling her "wise and beautiful" to increase the frequency of the liking, but the point is that we can love and praise God, even when we perhaps want to cry out, to object, to doubt, and to worry. All these things are human. And in our worries, doubts, fears and shortcomings – God sees us and STILL loves us. For that alone he is worthy of our love and praise.

Aidan Brierley

Monday 15th February John 3:1-16

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”
We are heading into Lent; a time of reflection & preparation of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. During Lent people give up something or do different things. It's the time of new beginnings! You may find it difficult to think of anything new and your thoughts may be reflecting backwards. That's alright to look to the past if it helps shape your future. Look to Jesus who died for us to start again. Take time and pause! Open your mind, heart and soul to God, receive the Holy Spirit for new beginnings; no matter how small or simple they may be.
Susan R

Tuesday 16th February

John 3:26-36

The verses I would like to focus on are from John 3 verses 31 - 36. Jesus knows what heaven is like and he came to earth to tell us the truth about God. As God's son he knows God's thoughts so he spoke God's words. If we believe in Jesus and what he said we have eternal life now not just after death.

But we have a choice. If we reject God we have death because we have rejected his love. We are not forced to believe in Jesus nor does he force us to receive eternal life. We must chose it or reject it. That is why it is important for us to tell people about Jesus.

Howard B

Ash Wednesday 17th February

John 8:1-11

This was a difficult passage for me to respond to as a friend is going through this very situation.

Who do I sympathise with and am I the right person to condemn anyone, especially when Jesus in verse 11 states, 'I do not condemn you either, go, but do not sin again'.

We need to see both sides of the situation, and as Jesus stated 'whoever has not committed any sin throw the first stone'.

We must therefore pray that both parties are given our thoughtful prayers and do not judge who is right or wrong in the situation, we give this to our Lord in prayer Amen.

Heather J

Thursday 18th February

John 4:4-14

Jesus sits and talks to a Samaritan woman going about her everyday task of drawing water from a well – what is noteworthy about that? In those days, Jews and Samaritans did not associate with one another (v 9). Nevertheless, Jesus spoke with her and listened to her life story. He did not want to talk about the differences between them but about the “living water” that will always quench our thirst (v 14). How can we accept people as they are with their life stories? Do we put barriers between certain people and our Christian faith whether we mean to or not?
Marion M

Friday 19th February

John 4:27-42

Interruptions

Ever been in the middle of a job and someone turns up and wants help or to talk? This woman had been collecting the water, trying to avoid her disapproving neighbours and now this man wanted water – and to talk to her. (Unheard of!)

By the end of the conversation, she has forgotten about the job (she leaves the water jar behind) and heads back to those disapproving neighbours to tell them she thinks she has found the Messiah. Guess what? They believe her!

Allow Jesus to interrupt your chores today – let Him talk – He may even ask you to tell your friends and neighbours.

Ruth Brierley

Saturday 20th February**John 4:43-end**

On Thursday we saw Jesus encountering the Samaritan woman, (who didn't know him), at the well which left her with an unexpected life changing, joyful experience.

Today a royal official, (who knew of Jesus, had faith in and trusted him), approaches Jesus begging him to come and heal his son. When Jesus told him to go, his son will live, the official took Jesus at his word.

What joy on his way home to hear his son had been healed at the exact time Jesus had spoken.

Let us trust Jesus and take him at his word today.

John Buxton

Sunday 21st February**Psalm 77:1-7**

We know that when in trouble or distress the right thing to do is to turn to the Lord for help (v.1-2). But when it looks as though God isn't answering our prayers (v.7), what then? The answer is found further on in the psalm (e.g. v.11-12). "I will remember the deeds of the Lord." Recalling the ways God has been faithful in the past encourages us to trust God in the present. We can wait patiently for the Lord knowing that He does hear us (Ps.40:1), has promised to be with us always (Matt.28:20), and will give us the strength we need each day (Phil.4:13).

Sheena Ward

Monday 22nd February**John 5:1-15**

Ignoring the "magic" of being the first one into the pool after the waters are stirred, Jesus offers healing to the paralyzed man. The man, not knowing who Jesus was, responds to His command to get up and walk, and is healed.

We *do* know Jesus, and Jesus knows what we need. We can try to blame others for our suffering ("there's no-one to put us in the pool") but if we stay attentive to the voice of Jesus, we will know His presence with us as He helps us through our suffering.

And just as, after the healing, Jesus came looking for the man in the temple, He remains with us through our suffering and forever.

Chris W

Tuesday 23rd February**John 5:19-29**

Are you of God? Take strength and comfort from this reading which speaks of unity and interdependence of our relationship with God the Father through Christ the Son. Take courage from the presence of the Lord in times of trouble. Put your trust and faith in God as you walk alongside Him, rejoice in his presence. Where is God working in your life?
I have called you by your name, you are mine.

Lorraine A

Wednesday 24th February**John 5:30-end**

Jesus understands that he can't do anything which is not the Father's will but the people don't believe him.

Jesus came to save us from our sins and enable us to have everlasting life but he was finding it hard to get through to the people because of their unbelief.

They would honour and believe each other but not Jesus and I think this was because he did such amazing things whilst here on earth that it was beyond their understanding.

Jesus confirms that when the people will be accused before the Father, they will not believe what Jesus has told them even though Moses wrote about him in the scriptures.

Lorraine de Simone

Thursday 25th February**John 6:1-15**

In this story of the feeding of the 5000 people, Jesus wants to test Philip's faith by asking him for a solution as to how they might feed all the people. Philip thinks on a human level by suggesting that it would be very expensive to buy enough food, but Jesus wanted to increase Philip's faith by performing a powerful and miraculous act! Financial resources are not the most important ones!

We should not limit our expectations of what God can do! If there is some difficult task that we feel God wants us to do, don't let your estimate of what can't be done keep you from taking on the task. God CAN do the miraculous, so trust Him to supply the resources!

Bryan K

Friday 26th February**John 6:16-27**

After Jesus had fed 5,000 people, the disciples set out across Lake Galilee. A storm arose, and they saw Jesus walking over the water; he reassured them, and took them safely to shore.

The people followed him across the lake, seeking more nourishment. Jesus told them to seek the longer-term sustenance which God gives, not just instant gratification. Yes, ask for help in times of need or trouble, but don't forget him the rest of the time. We need emergency spiritual help, but we also need regular nourishment of the soul.

Mike (737691)

Saturday 27th February**John 6:27-40**

Food! - How important it is!

We remember how Jesus fed the five thousand and how the devil tempted Him to turn stones into bread. Jesus reminded him that, although there is a need to provide food, man cannot live on bread alone but Jesus is the bread of life and it is only by having Him as our Lord that our minds and spirits can be fed.

To do this we must read His Word and spend time in prayer. This prayer is not just asking God for our wants but spending time in ACTS- Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication.

We must let our lives shine to bring Him glory.

Grace and Frank Hutchins 0191 2852171

Sunday 28th February**Psalm 105:1-6, 42-end**

Give praise to God through songs and actions. Make his name known throughout the world by telling of His wonderful acts. Rejoice for He is Holy and rely on His strength and always remember the miracles He has performed and how He has judged fairly to His favoured people. He remembers all the promises He makes. We should remember how much He has given us, the earth and everything in it. We need to remember the laws He has given us and the way He wants us to live and prosper. Alleluia!

Bryan K