

Will you seek God in all people?

We will, with God's help!



*This is your daily resource to help you connect with the themes of Sunday & continue your prayers through the week. This can be done on your own or in the family group. The liturgy is based on Home Prayers found in the Book of Alternative Services (p. 687). **If you do not have a prayer book, please take & keep one for your use.***

Our devotions this week will focus on the first of the six baptismal promises we make at baptism (page 159 of the Book of Alternative Services). It is possible you have been baptised but have never made these promises. This is ok. These promises can still be adopted as you move forward in your spiritual journey with Christ.

If you would like to make these promises for the first time at St. Dunstan's, we will hold a service of dedication on February 23rd at 10am. Just let me know!

Peace on your week,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Taylor'.

the Reverend David Taylor, Rector

Our Fourth Baptismal Promise:

Will you seek & serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?

We will, with God's help!

1. The Preparation

A candle is lit as someone says,

God our deliverer, you call us to walk humbly with you. When we are foolish, be our wisdom; when we are weak, be our strength; so that, as we learn to do justice & to love mercy, your rule may come to us as a blessing. Amen.

2. The Reading & Reflection

Read the passage from Scripture then reflect using the wonder questions as your guide. This guide uses the New Revised Standard Version.

MATTHEW 5:1-12

Notes on the reading:

- *This marks the beginning of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount (Chapters 5-8). It sums up Jesus' message that God's law is a matter of the heart & God's way is radically different than the human way.*
- *This reading is commonly called the Beatitudes which is the Latin word meaning Blessed. The Greek word that we translate as Blessed means Lucky or Fortunate.*
- *Jesus says some strange things in this reading. Lucky are the poor in spirit. Lucky are those who mourn. Etc. This is an example of Jesus showing us God's way as radically different from the human way.*
- *Some people interpret these phrases to mean, "Lucky are those who are not dependant upon wealth, success, health etc." Instead Jesus calls us to be dependant upon God.*
- *What we are dependant upon will have a direct relation to how we treat people. Are people a means to our pursuit of wealth, success, pleasure, etc.? Are we dependant upon people for our identity? If so, we will end up hurting ourselves & others.*

I wonder in what ways you feel lucky or fortunate.

I wonder how you have been dependant upon others in your pursuit of wealth, success, pleasure, safety, etc.

I wonder how you can depend more on God in your life.

MICAH 6:1-8

Notes on the reading:

- Micah was a prophet in ancient Jerusalem at the time that the Northern Kingdom of Israel was invaded by a foreign army & taken into exile. He witnessed the destruction of power, religion, economic systems & the lives of his neighbours & felt the call to warn his country that the same fate awaited them if they did not change their ways.
- Prophets are those who see a good future for the world, but don't think that their own generation will experience it because of how they live their lives. They understand history through a theological or spiritual lens.
- Micah was used by the early church to point out how Jesus fulfilled the ancient longing for a leader who would not take advantage of the people. But would establish justice & peace.
- It is very important to understand the direct relationship between social injustice & God's anger. God will remove leaders who rule at the expense of the people, no matter how often they pray or go to "church".

I wonder in what ways our treatment of others betrays what we believe about God.

I wonder if we can be Followers of Jesus & not be concerned about social issues.

I CORINTHIANS 1:18-31

Notes on the reading:

- Paul continues to press the point in his letter to the Church in Corinth that their greatness is not in the pursuit of so-called wisdom or power, but in their connection to the cross of Jesus. For God power is letting go, not taking.
- Our grasp for wisdom, prestige, power, success, fame, etc., is not God's way. & even though in the eyes of the world it seems like foolishness, the only way to true wisdom is sacrificial love (the cross).
- We do not need to be particularly skilled, outgoing or charismatic to seek & serve Christ in all persons. Rather we simply give of ourselves, out of our own weaknesses, sadness, fears, & stumbling openness to love.
- If we continue to boast in ourselves, rather than in the Lord, we continue to participate in the cycles of self-preservation & individualism that lead us into violence.

I wonder what skills & gifts you have.

I wonder if you ever felt jealous of another person's skills.

I wonder how we can embrace the way of the cross (self-sacrificial love).

I wonder what you need to let go of to serve Christ in all persons.

LUKE 10:25-37

Notes on the reading:

- Jewish leaders at the time of Jesus were all seeking the same thing: the greatest commandment, or the keys to unlocking the meaning of God's Law. The Talmud, an ancient Hebrew text of Rabbinical teaching highlights how each Biblical writer tried to establish the entire Law of Moses upon one, two, three, or ten commands. It might be interesting to look up Makkot 24a on Sepharia.org to read their ancient arguments.
- Jesus did the same, summarizing the entire law with two Hebrew Scripture passages: Deuteronomy 6:4 / Leviticus 19:18.
- The Good Samaritan is a story of how we might practically live our the two greatest commandments. This story highlights a number of counter-intuitive thoughts. First, the most unlikely person can fulfill the law to love one's neighbour. Second, we need to be neighbours to the most unlikely persons.

I wonder what your foundational belief is.

I wonder if we can love God ☩ not our neighbours.

I wonder if we can love our neighbours without loving God.

I wonder how you are a neighbour to an unlikely person.

GALATIANS 5:1-15

Notes on the reading:

- Paul writes to one of his first congregations because he has heard that there are people teaching them different things than what he taught. ☩ not just any old thing, but things that are directly contrary to what he feels is central to his message: All are able to access the grace of God in Jesus.
- New teachers are suggesting that non-Jewish Christians need to become Jewish before they can truly follow Jesus. That is, they must adhere to the Law of Moses, especially in the circumcision of the male Christians.
- Paul is deeply distressed ☩ begs the congregation to remember that his original message to them – the Good News – was that God has given them freedom in Jesus Christ, not a burden of cultural or religious practices. The only thing that matters is summed up in the Law: Love your neighbours as yourself.

I wonder if someone has tried to control your spiritual life.

I wonder if you have tried to control someone's spiritual life.

I wonder how we can fulfill the law by loving one another.

3. Prayers ☩ the Lord's Prayer

Pray one of the litanies beginning on page 110 of the Book of Alternative Services ☩ conclude with the Lord's Prayer.