



*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.***

The devotions this week prepare us for next Sunday as we reflect on the four commitments, we are invited to make this year. These commitments are meant to inspire our hearts & connect us into the life & work of Christ in the world around us. Please consider these commitments carefully as we go through the week & meet again on Commitment Sunday, February 23rd.

Peace on your week,

the Reverend David Taylor, Rector

1. The Preparation

A candle is lit as someone says,

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, & from you no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, & worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. 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 5:21-37 – THE SMALL THINGS IN LIFE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT

Notes on the reading:

- Our Sunday's Gospel reading follows the teaching of Jesus which says, "I have not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to fulfil (5:17). Jesus is calling his disciples into a deeper relationship with the Law of God. He wants his disciples to connect to the law with their hearts.
- "You have heard that it was said...but I say to you" (v. 21 etc.) is Jesus' way of getting into the deep meaning of the Law. God does not want us to just **not** murder ((v. 21), **not** commit adultery (v. 27), **not** divorce (v. 31), & **not** bear false witness (v. 33). God wants us to pay attention to the forces **behind** the violence we do, to pay attention to the energies **behind** human sexuality, to pay attention to the attitudes **behind** our relationships, & to pay attention to the reasons **behind** our commitments. Just not doing bad things isn't a sign of inner transformation.
- "You Fool" (v. 22) is the English translation of the Greek word Raka. It probably means Empty-headed. "Hell" is an English translation of the Greek word, Gehenna. Gehenna literally means the Valley of Hinnon. It was a place of child sacrifice by fire (cf. 2 Chronicles 28:3) & later came to symbolize the place where wicked people go. In verse 22 Jesus is saying that our treatment of others is directly related to the violence that we do. If we cannot control how we talk to another person, we will end up doing greater & greater harm. God will judge us with the same energy we use to harm others.
- Jesus' teaching on Divorce (v. 32) is a call to end the abusive dismissal of women from families thereby rendering them homeless & vulnerable. God's Law is not meant to be used to harm another person.
- When Jesus means to Let our "yes be yes" & our "no be no" (v. 37) he is saying that we need to resist being superficial or shallow in our commitments to God & others & really commit ourselves when we say we will.

I wonder how you feel about Jesus' way of interpreting God's Law.

I wonder how our inner violence (how we think of others) can turn to outer violence.

I wonder if you have ever committed to something & followed through.

ACTS 2:37-47 – THE COMMITMENT TO PRESENCE

Notes on the reading:

- The Commitment to Presence is a commitment to regular participation in the worship life of the Community. “Regular participation” will look differently to different households. This commitment is not a way to take Sunday attendance, but a way to help orient our lives by placing the presence of Christ at the centre of our homes.
- Our reading follows a lengthy sermon by Peter on the Day of Pentecost. In it he declared that the crucified Jesus has risen from the dead. This is the central reason why Christians gather regularly. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus not because he was the only one ever to rise from the dead (resurrection stories are a dime a dozen). We celebrate it because Jesus’ resurrection is a seal of God’s promise to not abandon us to the violent cycles of life but will show us a new way to live. Just as God could not abandon Jesus in his violent death, God cannot abandon us.
- The resurrection of Jesus leads us to a new way of life (repentance & baptism – v. 38). This new way of life is experienced in community (v. 36).

I wonder what Jesus’ resurrection means to you.

I wonder how you have experienced new life.

I wonder how you can give thanks to God for the life God gives you.

I wonder how Jesus’ resurrection guides your actions.

ROMANS 12:1-21 – THE COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

Notes on the reading:

- The Commitment to Service is a direct response to the resurrection of Jesus. We give in service as Christ gave in service. The three ways we think about service at St. Dunstan’s is by assisting with Sunday Worship, by volunteering at Messy Church & by volunteering for the Thursday Meal. How we give our time differs from one person to the next.
- The Letter to Romans is a dense read on Paul’s foundational understanding of who Christ is & what the Church is.
- The Church is a mixture of Jews & Gentiles (Romans 1-11). The wonderfully mixed church is strongest when it celebrates its diversity. Indeed, our diversity is a gift of the Spirit (v. 1-8)
- Love is the central virtue by which we conduct ourselves in the life of the church (v. 9).
- Love is practical (v. 13-20). The Christian way is to not be overcome by evil, but to overcome it by the good that we do (v. 21).

I wonder how you participate in the worship life of the community.

I wonder where you might want to assist the community on Sunday mornings.

I wonder how you participate in the outreach of the community.

I wonder where you might assist the community through the week.

MATTHEW 13:1-23 – THE COMMITMENT TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Notes on the reading:

- Spiritual Growth looks different for different people. For some growing required study, for others it requires silence, for others it requires nature, for others it requires prayer. We offer opportunities for spiritual growth for children at Messy Church, for Youth at Youth Group, & for Adults through the Centre for Spiritual Renewal.
- Matthew 13 reminds us of the primary way Jesus taught – through telling & reflecting on parables (stories). He does this, according to our reading, because people's hearts have grown spiritually dull & cannot understand (v. 13-15). For those who are willing, Jesus will give the meaning to his stories (v. 18)
- The growth of seeds is a great metaphor for how God's words do & do not grow in our hearts. If we are willing to tend to the "soil" of our hearts, we will grow much spiritual fruit.

I wonder how your heart nurtures the stories of Jesus.

I wonder how you can use the programs at Str. Dunstan's for your spiritual growth.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15 – THE COMMITMENT TO GIVING

Notes on the reading:

- The Commitment to Giving is based on the understanding that the ministry of St. Dunstan's rests on the generosity of its members. We cannot feed people, either spiritually or physically, as well as we do without financial gifts.
- 2 Corinthians gives us a peak into the fundraising Paul did as part of his ministry. He collected money from Churches to help other communities who were in need. He trusted that the churches he appealed to were so filled with gratitude for the good news of Jesus' resurrection, that they would give immediately & generously.
- Christian generosity comes from our deep connection with our own suffering & the suffering of the world (v. 2).
- Christian generosity is according to the means of the giver (v. 3, 12).
- Christian generosity is an imitation of Jesus (v. 9).
- Christian generosity comes out of a sense of abundance (v. 14).
- Christian generosity comes from the deep place of faith that God is taking care of us (v. 15).

I wonder if you have ever given money to a church. Why?

I wonder if you have ever been thanked for your generosity.

I wonder if you would like to help support the ministry of St. Dunstan's.

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.