The reading of Holy Scripture together as a community has been a central part of Christian worship throughout the Church’s long history. It has deep roots within the practices of Israel, and sustains God’s people today.

We read Scripture together not simply to learn new information about God’s dealings with humanity in the past, but to listen in faith to what the Living God is saying to us His people today. It is in fact a profound act of worship, a turning of our full attention to our Lord. We listen to His Word to draw closer to Him, and to one another in love.

After every Scripture Reading this morning, we’re all invited to take a few moments in silence to reflect upon the passage, and how God’s Spirit might be addressing us through it, as individuals and as a community.

In those moments, pay attention to any words, ideas, or images that stand out to you. In the silence afterwards, ask God to help you hear His heart for you today.

After the Gospel is read, and we’ve taken a moment in silence to reflect upon it, I’ll share a few reflection questions that Pastor Rob has prepared to help us dig in a bit deeper.

*Reflection Questions*

* In our First Reading from the Book of Genesis, we hear the tragic divisions in Jacob’s family play out in the next generation: the betrayal of Rachel’s son Joseph, the favorite of his father, by his jealous half-brothers, the sons of Leah and Jacob’s other mistresses. Joseph has his whole life ripped away by those closest to him: first thrown into a pit to await certain death, but then sold into slavery in far off Egypt. It’s hard to imagine a more hopeless situation.
* In our Second Reading from Romans, St. Paul speaks of the Gospel of Jesus the Risen Lord is a message of hope offered to *everyone*… Jew or Gentile, “*the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’*” (Romans 10:12-13). St. Paul points out how important it is that this message of hope for all be *shared*, so that everyone might *believe* it, and have it transform their lives.
* In our Gospel Reading, we hear the story of Jesus walking on the water, and St. Peter joining Him out on the waves. When he took his eyes of Jesus, he began to sink, and cried out for help. Jesus reached out and saved him, and called St. Peter to trust Him: “*You of little faith, why did you doubt?*” (Matthew 14:32).
* **How has God answered your prayers for help, maybe even when things seemed hopeless? Take a moment to give thanks to God, or to ask for His help where it’s needed today.**
* **Who are the people we tend to see as hopeless? (Those who are different from us? Those we know? Those we love? Maybe even ourselves?) How might God transform our hearts towards them, and even use us to share His message of hope with them? If this is a struggle, then we can ask God to help us trust Him in this way.**
* **What else is God’s Spirit saying to you today?**