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, we’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 start of the sibling rivalry of Isaac and Rebecca’s twin sons, Esau & Jacob. From before birth, these two struggled against each other, highlighting the important pattern in the Bible of division and strife within the one human family. We heard how Jacob takes advantage of his older brother’s impulsiveness, and cheats him of his status as firstborn. Neither brother is painted in a good light here, seeking their own selfish desires.
* In our Second Reading from Romans, St. Paul claims that those who are in Christ Jesus are set free to live a very *different* way of life, not chasing after our selfish desires, but being led by the Spirit of God dwelling in us to forgiveness of sins and new life, instead of condemnation and death.
* In our Gospel Reading, Jesus tells a well-known parable about seeds being sown on four types of soil… which is about various ways the Good News of God is received, or *not*. With some, the enemy keeps it from being understood and believed. With some, the challenges or other concerns of life keep it from growing. And with some, it takes root and bears much fruit.
* **How has Jesus already changed the course of your life? What old, self-centered ways has He freed you from? What new gifts and possibilities has He opened up for you? What is it that we might *still* need Jesus to set us free from today? Take a moment to invite Him to do so.**
* **Invite God to show you what He wants to grow in your life, the fruit of the Spirit He longs for each of us to bear, and how we can co-operate with Him to *nurture* this growth in us. How can we cultivate His love, joy, peace, generosity, self-control, faithfulness, kindness, patience, and gentleness?**
* **What else is God’s Spirit saying to you today?**