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

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. We listen to His Word to draw closer to Him, and to one another.

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 or 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 to 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 Isaiah, the Lord God uses the image of a well-tended and protected vineyard that does not bear good fruit, which is then neglected and allowed to fall to ruin, to speak of the judgement that was going to come upon God’s own unfaithful people. He had gone all out to care for His people, but their lives did not bear ‘good fruit’, so He was going to allow them to face the consequences of their wickedness.
* In our Second Reading from Hebrews, we heard of our spiritual sisters and brothers from ages past who’s faith in God supported them through all sorts of serious challenges, and who surround us even now, encouraging us to be faithful to Jesus our Saviour to the end, no matter the challenges we face in our own day.
* In our Gospel Reading, Jesus makes some shocking statements about “bringing division”, even among traditionally close-nit families and households. He speaks of this as a sign of the times that others should not find surprising.
* **Even when God warns His people of judgment, suffering, and division, do we trust that His aim is ultimately to *save*, not to destroy? If so, why?**
* **When have difficult or painful experiences in our lives (like having to face consequences of our bad decisions, or struggling through challenging circumstances, or having to let go of unhealthy relationships) actually *helped* us in the long run?**