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, Jacob’s uncle Laban deceives him into marrying both his daughters, Leah and Rachel, in exchange for 14 years of service, even though Jacob only wanted to marry Rachel. This scheme ends up causing *all sorts of pain and bitterness* down the road, but God is able to transform even their selfishness and sins into a source of His blessings in Jacob’s family.
* In our Second Reading from Romans, St. Paul affirms that the Living God can and does transform *all things* to work for the good of those that love Him. That doesn’t mean He *causes* or *condones* evil, but that evil *can never stop* His good and loving work in our lives. This leads St. Paul to rejoice “that *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Romans 8:38-39)
* In our Gospel Reading, Jesus offers several short parables about what the Kingdom of God is like: it is something seemingly small and insignificant, but that grows and spreads in mysterious ways; it is something that is *incredibly* precious, that when it is discovered is worth trading *everything* else to obtain; it is something that will one day be sorted out by God, and purified of all that is *not* of Him. In these parables, Jesus is pointing us to *Himself* and what *He* is up to in our world.
* **How has God *already* transformed the broken parts of our lives into a source of His blessing? Maybe through an *experience* of forgiveness, healing, or grace? Maybe through an *invitation* to extend these things to *others*? Where in our lives might we ask Jesus to touch with His saving love?**
* **What are some ways that Christ’s Kingdom is working in us today? Maybe it’s starting small, but spreading? Maybe it’s calling us to make some choices about our priorities? Maybe it’s challenging parts of our lives that are not yet in line with our Lord?**
* **What else is God’s Spirit saying to you today?**