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 wrestles with a mysterious man, desperately seeking a blessing at a time when he feels *very* vulnerable. He ends up receiving a new name (Israel), and another affirmation of God’s blessing in his life, along with a permanent injury. It was a painful but *transformative* experience.
* In our Second Reading from Romans, St. Paul reflects with anguish that many of his people, the Israelites, whom God loves and promised to be a special part of His blessings to all nations, had not easily embraced their Messiah, Jesus, and seemed to be acting against Him instead. St. Paul had to struggle with this tension, but he trusted God to be faithful in the end.
* In our Gospel Reading, Jesus performs an amazing miracle: from just a *few* loaves and fish, broken and devoted to God, He feeds a crowd of thousands, with *plenty* *more* to go around.
* **Have you ever felt like you have been wrestling with God? Why was that? Perhaps our fears or doubts made it hard for us to trust and follow Him. But God does not give up on *us* when we wrestle with Him! How can we bring even our fears and doubts to Him in faith?**
* **Jesus’ miracle reminds us that God loves to take what *seems* insignificant and make it *far more* than enough. With a handful of bread, He fed multitudes. With a handful of Jewish disciples, He shared the Good News of God’s Kingdom with the world. What is God asking us to trust Him with today?**
* **What else is God’s Spirit saying to you today?**