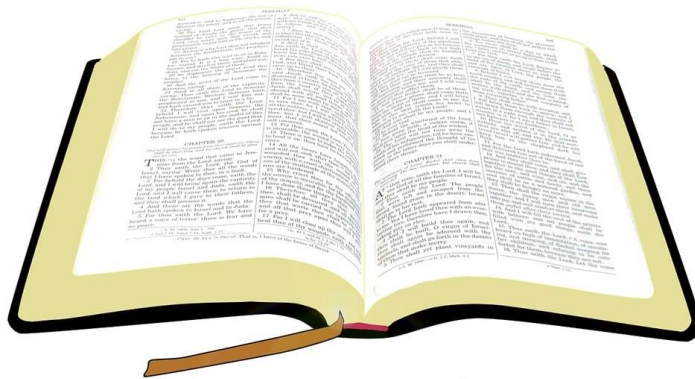


AUCHTERARDER PARISH CHURCH

MINISTER: REV DR LYNN MCCHLERY



SACRED SPACE

READING THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

IN PREPARATION FOR EASTER

During the six weeks before Easter, you are invited to make a “sacred space” in each day to read Luke’s Gospel and prayerfully allow it to speak to you.

Take time when you will be undisturbed, comfortable and, ideally, not rushed! 15 minutes is usually enough, a little more for longer readings. Finding the time is the hardest part! If you miss days, don’t pack it in, just do the reading for the day you are on and continue from there.

Suggested guidelines for how you structure this time with God are included at the start of each week. The basic pattern is the same:

- time to become still and focus on God,
- reading the Gospel and pondering it,
- time to pray about your reading,
- then to pray for others.

Both reading and prayer are equally important.

In order to read the whole Gospel in six weeks, some readings are longer and have several points to ponder after them. Please don’t “do” them all — choose one or two that most speak to you. Enjoy!!

Material adapted from “Sacred Space” published by Veritas Publications

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“Sacred Space” is also available as a website: www.sacredspace.com

Guidelines for Prayer.

The Presence of God

For a moment, I think of God's veiled presence in things:
in Creation, giving it existence;
in plants, giving them life;
in animals, giving them sensation;
and finally, in me, giving me all this and more,
making me a temple, a dwelling-place of the Spirit.

Freedom

God's Spirit breathes life into my most intimate desires, gently nudging me towards all that is good. I ask for the grace to let myself be enfolded by the Holy Spirit.

Consciousness

Knowing that God loves me unconditionally, I can afford to be honest about how I am. How has the last day been, and how do I feel now? I share my feelings openly with the Lord.

The Word

I take my time to read the Word of God, slowly, a few times, allowing myself to dwell on anything that strikes me. (Please turn to your scripture on the following pages. Inspiration points are there should you need them. When you are ready, return here to continue.)

Conversation

How has God's Word moved me? Has it left me cold? Has it consoled me or moved me to act in a new way? I imagine Jesus standing or sitting beside me, I turn and share my feelings with him.

Sunday 9th March

Luke 1:1-25

*Zechariah and Elizabeth were “barren” and had given up hope of having a child. What situation around me seems barren or hopeless? What may this passage say to that?

*Can I sense Zechariah’s mixed thoughts and feelings as he receives this news

”Lord I believe: help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24) How does this speak to me?

Monday 10th March

Luke 1:26-45

*Imagine what Mary felt as she was given this awesome news.

*Mary has questions, and she voices them, but she says ‘Yes” to God’s will for her. Can I learn from her example?

*Mary and Elizabeth savor the joy of a shared experience of pregnancy. Elizabeth is given the special gift of recognising what is happening here, and who is really present with her.

*In life do I always appreciate what is happening and who is present? I ask for the gift to see where God is at work in the people around me.

Tuesday 11th March

Luke 1:46-80

*Mary’s Magnificat is a prayer to sit with, quietly. It echoes Hannah’s song in I Samuel 2. It places us between the Old and New Testaments, charged with the longing of the Old and savoring the fulfillment of the New. In the whole history of salvation, this is a moment of pure joy.

*Mary is pregnant not merely with her child, but with dreams about a glorious future. A young mother overflows with gratitude for being the channel of God’s grace to humankind. ...

*“He is to be called John.” The giving of a name was rightly a serious matter. We grow into our names, identify with them, pick them out on a page, hear them above the chatter of conversation. Thank you, Lord, for my name, my identity, and for the dreams that you and others invested in me.

Wednesday 12th March

Luke 2:1-20

*And is it true? And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass windows hue*

A Baby in an ox's stall?

The Maker of the stars and sea

Become a Child on earth for me? (John Betjeman)

*Can I imagine myself as one of the shepherds who have just heard extraordinary news? We head off quickly towards Bethlehem. What do we find? What is happening? Who do I see here? How are they reacting?

*Remember your own experience of the birth of a child in your family. What did it mean to you? How does Jesus' birth compare with that?

Thursday 13th March

Luke 2:21-52

*Nunc dimittis, Simeon's prayer, expresses the richness of promises fulfilled, expectations met. What is it that makes this scene so heart-warming? Simeon senses God's providence in his life and is content to reach its end, having seen the Messiah. It is a moment of both fulfilment and promise.

*What about my longing and waiting? What am I hoping for deep down? How does the image of the Christ child in Simeon's arms speak to my hopes?

*Jesus is “a sign that will be opposed.” Are there parts of me that oppose Jesus? If I take a stand with Jesus, I too will have to face opposition

Friday 14th March

Luke 3:1-20

*John is preparing people for the coming of a spiritual kingdom, yet the preparation required could not be more practical. Can I prayerfully join them in asking, "What should I do to bring God's kingdom?" and be prepared to listen for God's answer?

*John could easily have claimed more for himself than he did (v15). Am I tempted to inflate my own importance, or content to serve?

Saturday 15th March

Luke 3:21-4:13

*I go in my imagination with Jesus from the "high" of baptism and God's affirmation, to the isolation and deprivation of the desert. If I was at Jesus' side during the 40 days, how would I be feeling? How do I express that to Him, and how does He respond?

*After 40 days, what would the Devil's voice sound like? I ponder the discipline, mystery and wisdom of Jesus' responses.

Sunday 16th March

Luke 4:14-44

*v 18-21 At Jesus' first opportunity to say publicly what he was about, this is what he said. It would be good to mull over his words a few times and ask, "How is this to be fulfilled in my hearing/in our world today?"

*v34 Because of his authority as the "Holy One of God," all evil is ultimately powerless before Jesus. Can I bring the evil that I confront in my life - and in our world - before him?

*How do I feel when I consider these things? Confidence in God? Doubt and fear? Perhaps I should talk this over with Jesus. ...

Monday 17th March

Luke 5:1-26

*When Peter lets Jesus direct him, things turn out in a way that leaves him awestruck and humbled. Can I say to Jesus, perhaps against my own inclination, “Because you say so, I will...”

*How might I allow Jesus to direct things in my life in a way that shows the greatness of God?

Tuesday 18th March

Luke 5:27-6:16

*Probably the tax-collector is stunned and incredulous when he sees the beckoning finger of Jesus: Who? Me! There must be some mistake! But Jesus knew this man. Levi left everything, his cash-filled table and his moneyed friends, and followed the Lord. The grace of God’s call is free, but not cheap. A change of life is required.

*What might Jesus be asking me to leave behind? How hard is that?

*The man, withered and deformed, stands with confidence because Jesus wants to heal him, no matter the opposition.

*Perhaps I can look into my own heart. Do I feel that some parts of me are withered? And what about those around me? I can bring this before Jesus, knowing that he wants to heal me, no matter what.

Wednesday 19th March

Luke 6:17-49

*Jesus’ words seem to turn our understanding of “the good life” on its head. What is Jesus saying about the misery and pain of so many lives?

* v27-31 How do I respond to this? I tell Jesus honestly my thoughts and feelings.

*v 46-49 What are the foundations of my life? What new way of acting is Jesus calling me to?

Thursday 20th March

Luke 7:1-17

*It would have been almost impossible for a Roman centurion to humbly put his faith in a wandering Jewish preacher. The culture and politics would have ruled out any contact, let alone this act of homage. His act of faith, so unexpected and against the culture, was a gift. It made a huge impression on Jesus,

*Do I sometimes find it hard to go against the culture of unbelief around me? What about the gift that the centurion received? Am I open to receive it?

Friday 21st March

Luke 7:18-35

* John wanted to know if Jesus was the real thing. Jesus simply points to the evidence of what everyone has seen and heard about Him. What if someone were to ask if I am the real thing (really a Christian)? Is there evidence of the life of Jesus in what I say and do?

*What an affirmation Jesus gives John! What made John so great was his readiness to take second place and be a signpost to Jesus.

*Where in my life am I asked to take second place? How do I really feel about that?

Saturday 22nd March

Luke 7:36-8:15

* The Pharisees found it hard to see themselves as sinners. How easy do I find it? Lord, open my eyes to the things that I am blind to about myself.

*What sort of a random crew was this, moving through the towns and villages? What motivated Joanna to leave home and join this group? What kind of loyalty moved Mary, after being relieved of her many demons? Who else was there?

*What—or who—explains this particular bunch of travelers? Who share my spiritual journey, and is there room for new members?

Sunday 23rd March

Luke 8:16-56

*I consider how close Jesus was to his mother and his immediate family. He wants to affirm, even at the risk of being blunt, that others are welcome in the same intimate relationship.

*What does it mean for me to be part of Jesus' family?

*Jesus notices the woman who touches his garment and considers her important—more important than she considers herself, at a time when Jesus has urgent business. How important does he consider me to be? How do I treat other people when I'm busy?

Monday 24th March

Luke 9:1-36

*Many stories are circulating about Jesus. Everyone wants a way of pinning him down, a category to put him in. But Jesus is interested in, "who am I to you?"

*v23-27 In hard words, Jesus reminds us that following him will involve struggle and some painful choices. Worldly success, of itself, doesn't impress Jesus; he wants us to be impressed with other values entirely.

*Am I carrying any cross? If so, can I let Jesus encourage and strengthen me? If I am dodging the cross, can I trust him to help me?

Tuesday 25th March

Luke 9:37-62

*Imagine the little child in this scene, the expression on the child's face. What is he or she like? Wide-eyed? Innocent? Trusting?

*I come with all my baggage, my skepticism, calculation, self-regard. Can I be like the little child, whom Jesus welcomes with open arms?

* v51-55 Here was a bit of standard hostility between a local Samaritan community and some passing Jewish pilgrims. Jesus' disciples react to the prejudice with spontaneous rage and some prejudice of their own.

*Does this ring any bells with me? What is Jesus' reaction here?

Wednesday 26th March

Luke 10:1-37

*Jesus does not send them out alone, but together. Do I have a companion on my Christian journey? Am I part of a Christian community or do I feel as though I am on my own?

*Think of what you take for a trip away—food, money, personal transport, clothes for all seasons. Why does Jesus send them with so little?

Thursday 27th March

Luke 10:38-11:36

*When I read the story of Martha and Mary, do I immediately take sides, or at least, identify with one rather than the other?

*If so, can I see beauty and value in the other one? If I am resisting and sticking with my own preference, I might have to try a little harder.

*The guarantee that God will answer persistent prayer may move me in a number of ways: excitement and encouragement, or frustration and dejection, depending on my past experience. No matter how I'm feeling, I ask Jesus for more understanding of his call to persevere in prayer.

Friday 28th March

Luke 11:37-54

*Here Jesus is confronting people who, because of their vested interests, are resisting the challenge of the truth that he brings.

*How do I react to a righteous and angry Jesus? Do I want to run away? Do I start getting righteous myself?

*Can I be honest about the parts of myself that resist Jesus' call and actions, for whatever reason? I might humbly ask for help to change.

Saturday 29th March

Luke 12:1-34

*"Nothing secret that will not become known" Do I consider this prospect with calm, or does it leave me in the grip of fear? ...

*Here is a challenge from Jesus to live in the truth no matter the cost. Can I face the challenge? If the challenge seems too great, can I hear the words “Do not be afraid; you are of more value than”

*The man in the parable doesn't seem a bad man. He is setting things up nicely for himself, planning an enjoyable life, sitting back and, no doubt, saying “because I'm worth it!” Do I hear Jesus sending alarm bells about all kinds of greed? ‘What are those alarms saying to me?’

Sunday 30th March

Luke 12:35-13:9

*This is a parable about the person to whom God has entrusted certain responsibilities. For what has the Lord made me responsible?

*How do I feel about the responsibilities that I carry? Do I ever want to put down others, or take advantage of my position?

*What do I make of Jesus' strong language? Can I hear it as a wake-up call? Deep down, what do I really think God wants from me?

*Where am I complacent? How is God stirring me to live a new and better way?

Monday 31st March

Luke 13:10-35

*Imagine the synagogue and the congregation listening to Jesus' teaching on a Sabbath. Can I see myself watching or taking part in the scene? As it unfolds, how do I react? With relief? Joy? Scepticism?

*Does the image of the woman bent and crippled speak to me and my experience, literally or metaphorically? What do I want to say to Jesus?

*Am I frustrated with the slow speed of God's action in and around me? What do the everyday images of kitchen and garden say to me? I let Jesus give me some real encouragement!

Tuesday 1st April

Luke 14:1-24

*I visualize the setting where Jesus meets the man suffering from dropsy and cures him, with a hostile audience of lawyers and Pharisees looking on.

*What feelings and motivations are going on in the various characters? Why do the Pharisees react as they do? What does the healed man make of it?

*How do I see Jesus here? What do I want to say to Him?

Wednesday 2nd April

Luke 14:25-35

*Jesus is asking his followers, “Are you serious about being a Christian, or not?”

*How do people organize themselves for things they are serious about? How do I organize myself for things that really matter to me?

*What do I want to say to the Lord?

Thursday 3rd April

Luke 15

*What do all 3 parables have in common? What, in general, are they saying?

*Which of the two sons is most like me—the hell-raising rebel, or the “good” son who is inwardly judgmental and self-righteous?

*How does the father respond to both?

*“More joy in heaven” Notice God’s delight when someone comes home. Can I imagine myself as the cause of this delight?

Friday 4th April

Luke 16:1-18

*This is probably the most difficult of Jesus’ parables, as He seems to commend morally dubious behaviour! What do you think Jesus is saying about how we are to use money? (V9) ...

*v 9-13 Again Jesus raises questions for us: "What is your strongest desire? Where does your deepest loyalty lie?"

*What do I make of God's interest and concern about what goes on in my heart? Is this threatening or consoling?

Saturday 5th April

Luke 16:19-31

* I may not have the poor literally on my doorstep, but through the media they are with me - do I choose to ignore them? Jesus seems to be warning His listeners to change their ways while there is still time.

*What will it take to get people to repent (turn around)? What would it take to make me change my behaviour?

Sunday 6th April

Luke 17:1-19

* v 1-6 Here are two very strong challenges from the Lord. Is there one that I am meant to hear right now?

*If forgiveness is the issue for me today, can I turn to the Lord and speak frankly about what is involved? If he is calling me to forgive something, then he will help me to do it.

*Is faith my issue? If the Lord is really challenging me to make the leap, he will lead me along the way. I need to speak honestly to him.

*How did the Samaritan look on Jesus? How do I look on Jesus? Do I feel I have much to give thanks for?

Monday 7th April

Luke 17:20-37

*What are the Pharisees waiting for before they are convinced that God is really with them?

*Are there echoes of the same thing in my life? What am I waiting for before I will acknowledge the kingdom of God around me? ...

*What change in my circumstances, in my heart, in the lives of those I love would help me to trust God more? Am I waiting for someone to say: 'There it is!'

*What is Jesus saying?

Tuesday 8th April

Luke 18:1-17

* Do I sometimes feel like the widow during the long period where she's not getting an answer?

*Can I look at my own experience and listen again to Jesus' sure statement of God's eagerness to be good to me? I might need to ask for more understanding here.

*What is it about children that Jesus commends and wants us to be like? How does this speak to me?

Wednesday 9th April

Luke 18:18-43

* Is Jesus too hard on the rich young man? Would I have been tempted to make it easier for him? I can talk to the Lord about this.

*I imagine myself present at the scene with the blind beggar. Who do I identify with? The blind person crying for help? Or one of the interested bystanders irritated by the cries of the poor man? Or one of Jesus' followers?

*How does what Jesus does here move and challenge me?

Thursday 10th April

Luke 19:1-27

*Zacchaeus, despite his limitations, was anxious to see who Jesus was.

*Jesus responds with enthusiasm to Zacchaeus' openness, even though tax collectors were shunned by Jewish society and it was a despised profession.

*What are my "blocks" in approaching Jesus? ...

*How would I like to have Jesus visit my house?

*I take a moment to review how much I have been given by God. How well am I using it, as a good steward?

Friday 11th April

Luke 19:28-48

*There is a party atmosphere as Jesus approaches Jerusalem. Jesus endorses this (v40), but He also sees what others miss: the tragedy of those blind to what's really happening, though they could have seen it. Can I pray for someone who is blind to the Jesus who alone can bring them peace?

*The Temple, the quintessential place of prayer, had been compromised over time by the intrusion of little businesses, each necessary in its own way. Jesus needed to challenge the drift and reassert the Temple's holiness.

*Similarly my church and my life are places where God wants to live. They too may be gradually compromised by many little distractions, each valuable in its own way. What needs to be cleared away to make space for God?

Saturday 12th April

Luke 20:1-26

*Cleansing the Temple is the trigger for Jesus' enemies to seek to kill him. Here they try twice, openly and subtly, to trap him into condemning himself by what he says. They end up being silenced by his wisdom and insight (V26)

*I may feel that I (or the church) am under attack by hostile or critical people. Can I talk to the Lord about how to respond?

*Jesus' other response is to tell this parable to them. What is He trying to say to them? Do I need to hear this myself?

Sunday 13th April

Luke 20:27-21:4

*Jesus' turn to ask them a question (v41). What is he teaching them about the Christ?

*What qualities does Jesus criticise in the teachers of the law? How might these qualities be seen today? Do I see them in myself? Can I talk to the Lord about this?

*Jesus admires the poor widow because she gave her all.

*What does it mean to give my all? Could I do it? Is it wise or advisable? Where have I seen others do it?

Monday 14th April

Luke 21:5-38

*As he faces his own death, Jesus foretells great troubles facing his followers. He does not minimize or water down the difficulties.

*Can that give me perspective on crises and upsets in my own life, or the life of the church or the world?

*In the same breath, Jesus tells them that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

*Jesus himself went on to face the ultimate crisis and upset. Yet this crisis was not the last word.

Tuesday 15th April

Luke 22:1-38

*I see myself present at this scene as one of the disciples, sensing their tensions, apprehensions and fears. How might it have felt to receive the bread and cup from the Lord himself?

*In giving it, Jesus acts as my servant. How difficult is this for me to accept?

*Faced with warning that his faith will be tried, Peter is overconfident. What is testing my faith at the moment? How do I feel about it?

Wednesday 16th April

Luke 22:39-65

*“Not my will, but yours be done”. I spend some time praying with this phrase over all areas of my life—work, home, church—becoming aware of where my own will is very strong.

*v51 is another example of how Jesus reacts to an enemy. Does this speak to me?

* Can I identify with Peter as he denies Jesus? Where have I done so in the past? Might I be doing so now?

Thursday 17th April

Luke 22:66-23:25

*Pilate and Herod are different, and treat Jesus differently—how do I see each man?

*Are there forces or opinions in today’s world that are not deliberately hostile to Jesus, but end up “crucifying” Him all the same?

*How easy do I find it to take an unpopular stand in favour of Jesus against the crowd? Am I called to do this today?

Friday 18th April (Good Friday)

Luke 23:26-49

*This is the heart of the Gospel and the core of Jesus’ mission, yet it is hard to contemplate. We shy away from watching anyone, let alone someone we love, suffering in such a way.

*Like the women, I spend some time in silence at the foot of the Cross.

*What does the Cross mean to me?

Saturday 19th April

Luke 23:50-56

*There is a point at which death seems like the end. I pray today for those who have lost loved ones.

*Where have I, or others, lost hope? What does today say to me?

Sunday 20th April (Easter Sunday)

Luke 24

*Is it possible, Lord, that you walk with me even where I am not aware of you, or I even feel your absence? Open my eyes to see Your presence in my life where I least expect it.

*It's ironic that when they see the one they long for, they are startled and terrified. The risen Lord always takes us by surprise!