

DAILY READINGS

Summer Stories

January 14 - 18



Due to the holiday season, the January Daily Readings were prepared far in advance of the Summer Series, and so therefore are not connected with the content of the Summer Series.

The readings for the next four weeks will take us through the two New Testament books of 1 & 2 Peter. The readings will still follow the same format as before.

Enjoy.

Day 1 – The Whole Story

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – 2 Peter 1:12-21

Peter himself had stood on the mountain with Jesus at the transfiguration. At the time he didn't know what it signified, but now, after all he has seen and experienced as a disciple of the crucified and risen Lord, Peter is able to share that he has seen Christ revealed and tell others of what he has been witness to. It is not a story. It is not a myth that was created and tacked on to the life of Jesus. Peter was there on the mountainside; he can testify to what he has seen. The full story of Jesus – of who he is and what he did and continues to do – stretches right back through the Old Testament, through the prophets. It is that story which has helped Peter make sense of that miraculous revelation he was privy to on the mountain that day. That transfiguration, the revelation of the glory of Jesus, is the key to unlocking what the prophets were always ultimately speaking about. The whole story now makes sense.

The coming of Jesus was the fulfilment of the hopes and aspirations of Israel. All that God had promised had come true. God's glory was revealed, the Temple was rebuilt, and the Messiah had come to rescue his people. These things had not happened in the way people expected, but they had happened. They were not myths or made up stories. Also unexpected was the gap between Jesus' appearing and the final, glorious day of the kingdom revealed in all its fullness. Hence the need for Peter to reiterate what he has seen as true, and to exhort his readers to remain faithful to Christ and hold to the truth that has been revealed to them.

Questions to Consider

Do you have a 'transfiguring' moment in your life, a moment when the truth of who Jesus is was suddenly revealed to you? What happened?

Prayer

Holy God, help us to remember the full story of all you have done throughout history to bring all creation and all people back to you. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 2 – Doves and Serpents

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – 2 Peter 2:1-10

In Matthew 10:16, as he sends his disciples out, Jesus warns them that it will be necessary for them to be “as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves.” We might think – or at least hope – that discipleship shouldn’t need to be like this, that only positive traits like love and compassion and mercy and humility and innocence need be cultivated in us. It seems wrong for Peter to have to invoke the cunning of the serpent as something that Christians need to have in their armoury as they navigate their way through the world. Is such suspicion really necessary?

Unfortunately yes, says Peter. There will be false prophets and false teachers out there, and unfortunately they’ll pretty much look like all the rest of us. They’ll even sound pretty good too, at least initially. But Peter warns us to look out for them, and offers a few of the danger signs that we should look for. Such teaching will deny the central importance of Jesus and may very well cast doubt on the saving efficacy of his death. False teaching will encourage unholy practices. And watch out for greed as a motivating factor. We don’t need to see conspiracy theories and false prophets around every corner. That reaction swings things too far back the other way. But we do need to be alert. The stories that Peter alludes to at the end of this passage show that God is faithful and rescues his people out of trouble, no matter the circumstances. Yes, we will be tested. But God will not be mocked. He knows how to rescue his people, and he will.

Questions to Consider

How can we be on our guard? Have you ever been tempted by false teaching? How did you eventually realise it was false?

Prayer

Almighty Father, help us remain true to your Word, so that we are not led astray by words that seem so close to what you have revealed to us. Keep us alert and faithful in all we do. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 3 – Staying Alert

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – 2 Peter 2:10-22

Peter is issuing a clear warning to his readers as they undertake the difficult, sometimes dangerous task of making their way through a hostile world, which contains snares and temptations, and occasionally people, just waiting to lead them astray. Peter is not referring to people making one or two minor, occasional mistakes. There are some very dangerous people out there, he says, and it is imperative that God's people be aware of this and learn to recognise these people when they come across them. It is unfortunate that we need to do so, but just as there is the potential to encounter false teachers and prophets in this world, so there is also the possibility of encountering people intent on leading us astray.

The list of vices and behaviours that Peter lists is a rather horrifying one, yet at the same time one that should evoke sorrow in us too. This is not a list of what we are meant to be, but rather a list of the things that we are not meant to be. The point is that these tendencies are present in all of us. We might wish it was not so, but we know that it is. However much we might prefer to be snide and judgemental about people we know who are like this, "...there but for the grace of God..." is what we should be thinking. The discipline of self-control, the willingness to submit our desires to God and crucify them if need be, and the need to persevere in allowing the Spirit of God to transform us.

Questions to Consider

How do we recognise people like this? what can we do to make sure we do not develop any of these characteristics?

Prayer

Loving Father, teach me self-control and submission. Continue to pinpoint those things in me that I need to nail to the cross in order to become more like you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 4 – All Things Revealed and Laid Bare

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – 2 Peter 3:1-10

Over the centuries much has been made of this passage, with many people interpreting it to mean that the physical cosmos that we know – the space/time universe of matter governed by physical laws that we inhabit – will be destroyed, burned up. This is a view very popular in some circles today: Jesus will return in judgement, a judgement that will be played out through the destruction of the physical universe, and with all the people of God transformed into spiritual beings living eternally with God in heaven.

Well, no. Previous translations of this passage did use the phrase ‘will be burned up’, but once older manuscript copies of the letter were found, it was discovered that that phrase was not there. (That kind of ‘destructionist’ theology appears nowhere else in early Christian literature.) What is being talked about is a ‘revealing’, in which all things will be ‘laid bare’. The fire that comes is a fire that ‘tests’ things, as a part of God’s final judgement on all creation. It’s a fire that purifies as it burns, getting rid of anything that is tainted or that doesn’t measure up to God’s standards. The ‘day of the Lord’ will come. All things will be laid bare and judgement will be passed. To those who believed that the failure of Jesus to return meant the whole thing was a big mistake, that there will be no return, and there is no need to remain faithful to something that is obviously wrong, Peter says no, it is true, Jesus will return – and all things will be judged and creation will be restored.

Questions to Consider

In verses 1-2, what is Peter encouraging his readers to remember? Why? What is important about remembering these things? How does it help?

Prayer

Father God, help me remember the story, and help me continue to trust that you will bring all things to the good and perfect end you have always intended and promised. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 5 – To Grow in Grace

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – 2 Peter 3:11-18

At the time of Peter's writing, many Christians were perhaps getting slightly impatient – and possibly a little concerned and perplexed – with the seeming delay in the second coming of Jesus and his continued non-appearance. He had promised to come back for his people, to consummate the kingdom in all its fullness and to vindicate his followers' faithfulness; he had even said that some of his generation would even be alive to see it. Now, all these decades later, and the world was still going its own way in rebellion against God, and there was no sign of the return of Jesus. But rather than focusing on the church's impatience with God's timing, it might be better to see it from God's point of view: perhaps there is a delay because God is having to be very patient with us. Perhaps God is postponing the day in order to provide time for more people to come to know him – it's the kind of thing he would do. And by allowing more time, he is also allowing more time for us, his holy, chosen people, to act as his people in and for the world, showing love to all and working for the world's transformation and renewal.

So don't give way to despair or impatience, says Peter; be alert to those who would try and pull us away from true faith in the true God, or those who would distract us from our appointed task. But he also tells us, looking back to the start of the letter, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus, and to deepen our relationship with him and with each other.

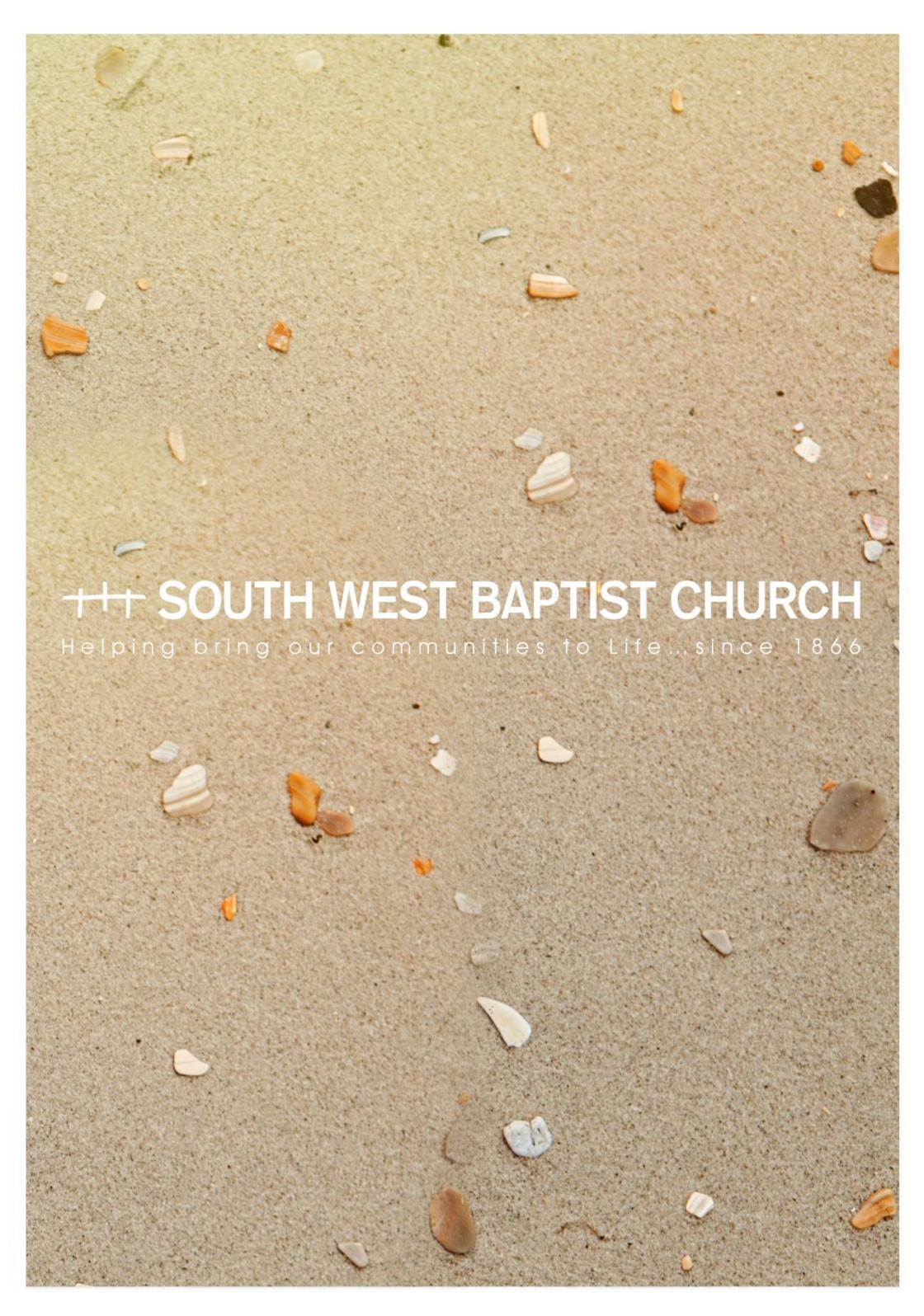
Questions to Consider

What does Peter mean by what he says in verse 18 about growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord? How do we do this?

Prayer

Heavenly Lord, continue to grow in me and shape me into your likeness. May I see your grace more and experience more of your love. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)



+++ SOUTH WEST BAPTIST CHURCH

Helping bring our communities to Life...since 1866