

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

So runs the Collect for the Last Sunday after Trinity, previously used for the Second Sunday in Advent and, for that reason, often called Bible Sunday.

The Scriptures lie at the heart of our worship. One of the features of our Anglican tradition is our ordered reading of the Scriptures, Sunday by Sunday. In the course of our three year cycle of readings we reflect on all the major themes of scripture and our readings are drawn from all sections of the Bible.

It has been said of the Bible, that it is not just a matter of us reading the Bible, the Bible reads us. When this happens, there is a resonance between the words we read, the words we hear and our daily living. On occasions, this will be one of encouragement; on other occasions the words we read and hear will challenge us. What we are talking about here is an engagement with the Scriptures, that as we read and hear the scriptures we not only hear and read the words of the Bible but in and through them hear God's word to us and for us. This is very much expressed in the words of this collect:

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Our Prayer Book is called the Book of Common Prayer. Common Prayer, prayer we undertake together, as a community. And so our reading and reflection on the Scriptures is a Common Reading, a shared activity. This Lent, instead of our customary evening services, I want to take the opportunity of exploring this idea of our shared reflection on the Scriptures Sunday by Sunday a little further. Each Wednesday night I am inviting folk to the Rectory for a simple reflection on the Scriptures set for the following Sunday to which we would all contribute, from which we can all receive. So each Sunday copies of the readings for the following Sunday will be available and they will also be posted on the Parish Website. You might choose, instead of coming to the groups that meet in the Rectory, you might just wish to reflect on them yourself in your own quiet time. Speaking on the Anniversary of the publication of the Authorised Version of the Bible, Archbishop Rowan Williams remarked that one of the principle insights of the Reformers was that the Bible was intended to be read in community, that even our individual reading of the Scriptures was in the context of our shared reading of the Scriptures in public worship.

And so as we approach our readings, Sunday by Sunday,
help us so to hear them,
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that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,