GIVING & RECEIVING: Let Blessings Blessings Flour

Daily readings and reflections for St. Andrew's

Stewardship Season 2025

Giving and Receiving: Let Blessings Flow

What does it mean to "let blessings flow"?

You've probably heard nature's parable of the two seas in the Holy Land. In the northern part of Israel lies the Sea of Galilee, where fishers like Andrew, Peter, James, and John made their living. These bountiful waters that fed thousands are themselves fed from the north by the Jordan River cascading from the hills. And at the sea's south end, the waters narrow and become the flowing Jordan River once again. Because it receives and gives freely, the Sea of Galilee is alive.

In contrast is the Dead Sea, just 85 miles to the south. The Jordan flows into it, too. But unlike the Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea holds on to every drop it receives—or, at least, it tries to. There's no exit for these waters at the lowest point on earth, other than evaporation. So, its stagnant waters support no life at all, and the Dead Sea's name rings true.

Through the six weeks of the year's Stewardship Season, we'll reflect on giving and receiving, the natural rhythm of God's economy. We hope the following daily Scripture readings will help you feel that flow in your own spirit and through your daily life.

This year, our stewardship devotions speak with a wide variety of voices. Six clergy are joined by eight lay leaders—six Vestry members and two staff members. Like these voices, no two spiritual journeys are the same. But we'll be traveling together over these six weeks as we:

- Give God thanks and praise (week 1).
- Give others a share of the blessings God has given us (week 2).
- Give God a share of the blessings God has given us (week 3).
- Receive meaning and purpose in this life (week 4).
- Receive peace the world cannot give (week 5).
- Receive God's blessings in this life (week 6).

We invite you to come along!

— Fr. John Spicer, Mtr. Jean Long, Mtr. Rita Kendagor, Mtr. Anne Hutcherson, Deacon Adam James, Archdeacon Bruce Bower, Ward Cook, Karen Lundgren, Tim Dodderidge, Carolyn Johnson, Scott Burditt, Tim Cranor, Mary Sanders, and Nina Edwards

Week 1:

Give God thanks and praise.

God wants us to give thanks and praise so that we appreciate the gifts that have been given to us. By learning to be thankful, we also learn to be humble and kind to others—and to appreciate the small acts of kindness we can show to one another. — *Ward Cook*

Oct. 12, 2025 - Genesis 28:10-17

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a stairway set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring, and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Jacob has gone off to seek his fortune, as the fairy tales might say. When I was little, I took that literally, thinking there's a pot of gold out there with each of our names on it; and if we just look hard enough, we'll find it. But I wondered how the fairy-tale heroes knew where to look. As we age, we come to see where our well-being truly lies. As we journey—in vocation or pilgrimage or simply walks with the dog—we find that what we're seeking isn't "out there" somewhere. We're seeking the God who walks alongside us, the One who shocks us by showing up. "Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go," God tells Jacob as he leaves home to seek a wife and household of his own. But the greatest gift comes well before Jacob finds a woman he loves. In themiddle of nowhere, Jacob sees that "the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" Praise God for opening the gates of heaven in the last places we'd expect. — Fr. John Spicer

Oct. 13, 2025 - Luke 17:11-19

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten men with a skin disease approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus's feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine? Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

My children and I had the opportunity to go on mission trips to Ixtapa, Guatemala. This village and the surrounding mountainous area are the homes of the Mayans. Every trip became more and more eye-opening. The Mayans live happy, faithful lives in small dirt-floor homes that lack running water and electricity, but each home includes a shrine to Jesus and Mary. Their prayers of gratitude for life and their praise to God are what affected me the most. What sets the Mayans apart, just like the Samaritan, was not their need—everyone is desperate—but their response. They recognize something deeper in life, reorienting their hearts toward God, deepening their faith. — Karen Lundgren

Oct. 14, 2025 - Revelation 5:11-14

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them, singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshiped.

The book of Revelation is about God restoring a threatening world to the order and blessing that God intended in the beginning. Today, that can seem a distant dream as we see violent tribulation worldwide. Where is Christ, our victor? Where is God in this mess? What better way of living should we seek? For me, insight comes from a lovely old tree. Once, a frightening storm slammed that tree—and me—but the tree showed me how to swing with the wind, swaying to its rhythm without cracking until the storm passed by. It's a brilliant way for

humans to handle crisis, too. We *can* find deep peace, but only if we give God time, and acknowledge God's authority, to control what we see as chaos. And we might throw in our thanks and praise that God relieves us of that burden! — *Mtr. Anne Hutcherson*

Oct. 15, 2025 - Psalm 100:1-5

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him; bless his name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations.

It's easy to spend time complaining about things that go wrong in our lives. That's why I make such a deliberate choice to express gratitude regularly. For me, keeping a gratitude journal has helped me live out this psalm, and it gives me an opportunity to praise God and give thanks to him. Whether it's my friends and family, the job I have, or the hobbies I enjoy, all of that stems from the God who made us. My gratitudes are the joyful noise I make to the Lord, demonstrating all the blessings around me. Even when things go wrong, these verses remind me to ground myself in gratitude, as God is good and always worth praising. — *Tim Dodderidge*

Oct. 16, 2025 - Colossians 3:16-17

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Doing random acts of kindness used to be a big thing, perhaps brought into the limelight by Oprah Winfrey. But just pause for a moment and ask yourself, "Why am I active with this charity, or why am I participating in that outreach program?" This Scripture is essentially admonishing us to pause and consider our motive for doing what we do. "Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus"—not to be seen, not to have your name up in lights, but all because of who Jesus is and whom he has called you to be. This is our motive, as we give thanks to God through his Son. — Mtr. Rita Kendagor

Oct. 17, 2025 - Psalm 95:1-7

O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

When I was a child, our non-liturgical worship services always started with a choral call to worship based on Habakkuk 2:20: "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." As it turns out, this verse from Habakkuk is also one of the opening sentences for Morning Prayer in the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*! Morning Prayer also includes confession of sins, the Lord's Prayer, and today's reading, Psalm 95:1-7, the Venite (p. 82). I take great comfort in the Psalm and the Habakkuk passage, standing like bookends in my worship journey. The God of Creation—of caves with nocturnal creatures, colorful hills of maple trees, and the deep blue of the Mediterranean Sea—is *in*, is with us, the body of Christ. What other response is there but to bow down? As we sing with joy, it is most relieving to know we are not in charge. — *Carolyn Johnson*

Oct. 18, 2025 - 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18

See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians call us to live differently: do not repay evil with evil but seek to do good for all. That command cuts against our instincts. In daily life, whether at work, in ministry, or at home, the easy path is to meet hurt with hurt. Yet discipleship asks us to break that cycle—to seek peace, to be people who build up rather than tear down. God then gives us practices that sustain this way of life: rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances. These are not sentimental sayings but survival instructions. Joy is a choice to hope. Prayer is the air we breathe. Gratitude is trust that God is still at work, even in hard seasons. As the year turns and the days shorten, these words remind us that God's will is not our exhaustion, but our renewal in Christ. — Deacon Adam James

Week 2:

Give others a share of the blessings God has given you.

If you give of yourself, you will receive the same in return tenfold. To give of yourself shows the kindness and generosity that God want us to show. God wants us to be an example of how to live your life with Christ. — *Ward Cook*

Oct. 19, 2025 - Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

What strikes me in Zacchaeus's story is not only his eagerness to see, but how powerful it was for him to be seen. Surrounded by a crowd that judged and dismissed him, one moment of recognition changed everything. I often think about how many people in my world—clients, friends, and even my own family—feel overlooked. A simple act of noticing, such as calling them by name or inviting them in, might be the spark that shifts their whole perspective. Transformation often starts with being seen and valued. This story challenges me to pay closer attention, to slow down and look people in the eye, to remind them they matter. Sometimes the most life-changing thing we can do for another person is simply notice them. Who in your life might need to be seen, valued, or called by name, and how could you be the one to offer that? — Scott Burditt

Oct. 20, 2025 - Matthew 25:34-40

Describing the judgment of the nations, Jesus said: "Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.'"

This is one of my very favorite Scripture passages. That's partly because I like to-do lists such as Jesus gives us here. And I like even more to check things off my lists! I used to go through this passage as follows: "Have I given food to the hungry? Yes ... check! Have I visited a sick friend? Yes ... check!" Etc. I could make myself feel pretty worthy by checking off all the good things I had done for my friends. I felt like I was a pretty nice guy for doing such nice things for other nice people! Ultimately, I came to understand that while it's important to support our friends and families with resources and care, Jesus charges us to move beyond our tight little boundaries to exhibit compassion and offer blessings for the "least of these" ... the poor, hungry, sick, and marginalized. That is when our selfless acts of love and service shine as evidence of true righteousness in God's Kingdom. – Archdeacon Bruce Bower

Oct. 21, 2025 - James 1:22-27

Be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing. If any think they are religious and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

"You had one eye on the mirror as you watched yourself go by...."

— Carly Simon, "You're So Vain"

James talks about the importance of not just listening to the Word but processing it, understanding it, and then living it! Otherwise, we're like someone who only glances in the mirror, rather than absorbing the image that tells who we really are. We're instructed to do, rather than just talk. Our responsibility is to take care of those who can't take care of themselves. Recently, I discovered that a long-time friend of mine had made some poor financial decisions and was incarcerated in a federal prison in Oklahoma. I was the best man at his wedding and wanted to let him know that he was still my close friend. I traveled to Oklahoma, had dinner with his wife, and spent the day with him in prison. I hope he understands how much people care for him as they await his release. And I hope, when I look in the mirror, I don't see someone only thinking of himself. — *Tim Cranor*

Oct. 22, 2025 - Isaiah 58:6-9

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."

One of the things this passage brings to my mind is the Outreach Commission at St. Andrew's, all its partnerships and ministries. I see the good works of this group every day, and I feel like we do an amazing job of sending love back into the world. Through the people involved in these ministries, the Lord says, "Here I am," in hundreds of different ways to hundreds of different people. — *Mary Sanders*

Oct. 23, 2025 - Matthew 19:16-22

Then someone came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. Also, you shall love your neighbor

as yourself." The young man said to him, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Like many of us, I'm guilty of being materialistic. I work seven days a week. I work to pay bills, take care of my family, and buy the things that I want. However, my wife works and could easily take care of our family without my help. If I were a better man, would I sell everything? I follow the commandments; I believe in Jesus; I make sure my family is in the pew every Sunday. So, why do I feel like the young man in the story as he's walking away? What do I lack? Jesus doesn't tell the young man that he lacks anything. He tells him what he must do to be "perfect." The irony in this is that we *can't* be perfect. Jesus owns perfection. We don't have to be perfect to get to heaven. God doesn't need me to sell all my cowboy boots, but he does want me to remember that I can't check my luggage on the way up. — *Ben Gloe*

Oct. 24, 2025 - James 2:14-17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Surely that faith cannot save, can it? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

When first reading this passage, I thought, "That's really straightforward; what more can I say?" But the message is deeper than just the importance of doing good works. It's about the spirit within us. The Greek word for "works" that James uses is the same word we would use for our daily work or job. We must strive to do all our works as a reflection of a transformed heart. It's a heart that trusts in God that leads us to feel compassion for, and to act to help, someone in need. — Nina Edwards

Oct. 25, 2025 - Luke 3:10-14

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What, then, should we do?" In reply, he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

John's words are so straightforward: Share what you have, be fair, do no harm. On the surface, they feel like ordinary instructions anyone could follow. But when I stop looking at others and turn those words toward myself, I realize how difficult they really are. Letting go of comfort or control is never easy, and what looks simple from the outside often hides a deeper challenge. Yet it's in those small but costly shifts—choosing generosity, fairness, and integrity—that God's blessings begin to flow. The very changes I resist most can become the ones that bring life, not only to others but within me, as well. Where in your daily life is God inviting you to take on a small but difficult change so that blessings may flow more freely in you and through you? — *Mtr. Jean Long*

Week 3:

Give God a share of the blessings God has given you.

God has blessed us with the gift of life, so in return our gift is to show love and appreciation to God, as well as spreading his love to others so they may understand his love. Understanding and appreciating God's love as *the* gift is a big part of what it means to be a Christian. — *Ward Cook*

Oct. 26, 2025 - 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

My sister tells the story of taking our niece out for birthday lunch when she was a child. Our niece wanted to get the larger portion of the entrée as a birthday treat; and my sister (perhaps pinching pennies) replied, "Well, you know what they say: 'Enough is as good as a feast." To that, our wide-eyed niece said in wonder, "Do you suppose it's true?" Today's reading tells us that, "having enough of everything," we're able to "share abundantly" from those blessings God has given us. But our wiring for more can keep us from buying into God's economy. Regardless of how much we have, our spiritual challenge is trying to see it as being enough—and, therefore, a feast. For when we see ourselves blessed with a feast, it's easy to give back to God bountifully ... and, thereby, to reap the same. — Fr. John Spicer

Oct. 27, 2025 - Genesis 28:20-22

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house, and of all that you give me, I will surely give one tenth to you."

This reading captures the start of Jacob's spiritual journey. He bargains with God out of fear and need, but it's a step towards owning his faith. I, too, bargain with God, but I need to move on from this beginning of trust to grow in my faith. When my 23-year-old son was planning to volunteer with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) in Palestine, because of my

fears I begged him to stay home. He told me that God is watching over him, for he is doing God's work. I needed to entrust my son to God and not bargain with God for my son's safety. — *Karen Lundgren*

Oct. 28, 2025 - Mark 12:41-44

Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

I can't read this passage without analyzing what I do, or don't do, in terms of helping others. I think of a friend I see once a year. She lives a hectic and full life as an Episcopal bishop, and I have respected and loved her from first glance. I'm not alone; everyone wants time with her. But there is another group who recall how they admired her despite not knowing her real life. She was simply one of them for a month when she lived homelessly. She writes: "All races, all types, and all conditions of people who seek their daily bread surround us. Good people. Gifted people. You. Me. All of us who are willing to admit to our hunger and to the wandering spirit that dwells within." This bishop's story is about the people she loved. How might you love others as a way of giving yourself to God?

— Mtr. Anne Hutcherson

Oct. 29, 2025 - Luke 12:15-21

Jesus said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Everything I own is temporary. While I'm an avid collector of movies, music, and games, I can't take those things with me when I die—and there's no guarantee of tomorrow for any of us. When you put that into perspective, you realize there are more important things in life than the things you own. This reading

is a warning to be wary of materialism and greed, and that our focus should be on our relationship with God rather than the possessions we compile. Like the farmer, I often focus too much on material things, and I think we're all guilty of this at times: making more money, getting the nicer phone, buying the fancier car. These "treasures" are temporary, but our true treasure lies with God. — *Tim Dodderidge*

Oct. 30, 2025 - 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia, for during a severe ordeal of affliction their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the favor of partnering in this ministry to the saints, and not as we expected. Instead, they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us.

When I was at Wichita State University, I met with a small group of friends for Bible study and prayer weekly. We referred to our meeting simply as The Group. I'd been actively involved with a larger campus ministry organization but had pulled away due to cultural insensitivities. My small group was made up of African American students. They knew about my issues with the larger campus Christian organization, and they prayed for my healing from those hurtful experiences. One Saturday night, The Group handed me an envelope full of money. They knew the larger ministry organization had an international missionary conference coming up, and they had pooled their money so they could send me. I hadn't planned to attend this conference, and I knew my friends couldn't afford such a gift. We were all struggling college students! Yet, they persisted in saying that God wanted them to pay for my registration and transportation. My friends at WSU gave themselves to the Lord, as did the Macedonian church. And in doing so, they made themselves available to me. — Mtr. Rita Kendagor

Oct. 31, 2025 - 1 Timothy 6:17-19

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches but rather on God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

"Take hold of the life that really is life." That's some wise advice from a weathered apostle to the gifted but young Timothy. For this young leader has the difficult task of reminding the wealthy elders among his community not to be haughty, to know that it's God who richly provides, and to share what they have. As the message given to Timothy speaks to us today, what "really is life" for me and for you? Perhaps it's still the same: to share our love, our hope, and our generosity with our neighbor, a "good foundation for the future." What richness of spirit. What wealth of heart. What lasting joy. — Carolyn Johnson

Nov. 1, 2025 - Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul reminds us that worship is not only what we do on Sundays but how we live every day. To offer our bodies as a living sacrifice means giving our whole selves back to God: our time, our energy, our skills, and our compassion. Everything we have is a blessing first given to us. The call is to return a share of that blessing in service and love. Paul also warns us not to be conformed to the patterns of this age. It's easy to fall into the cycle of self-interest, consumerism, and distraction. But God calls us to something deeper, the renewal of the mind and transformation of the heart. When we live this way, we begin to see what God's will is in our lives, what is good, acceptable, and perfect. Giving back to God is not loss. It is discovering freedom and joy in the life Christ has set before us. — Deacon Adam James

Week 4:

Receive meaning and purpose in this life.

We always debate whether God has a specific plan for us or we create our own journeys. Regardless which way you see it, as long as your journey is fruitful, you will find meaning and your purpose in life. The intent is that, whatever happens along your journey, you serve the Lord and keep him in your heart every day. — Ward Cook

Nov. 2, 2025 - Jeremiah 29:11-14

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Jeremiah's words remind me that my life is not random, even when it feels messy or uncertain. My wife and I have been empty nesting for a few years now, yet I still sometimes wonder what my role looks like, how to use my time, where to focus my energy, and whether my best years are behind me. I carry the weight of mistakes I wish I could undo, and I feel the ache of change as my kids step into their own lives. But his promise steadies me: God says he has plans for my good, to give me a future filled with hope. His plans don't crumble when I stumble, and they don't end just because a season has shifted. For me, that means trusting that renewal is still possible, that growth is still ahead, and that this second act can be even richer and more purposeful than the first. When one season of life shifts—whether it's children leaving home, a career change, or another transition—how do you see God opening the door to new growth, purpose, or hope in the season ahead? — Scott Burditt

Nov. 3, 2025 - Genesis 12:1-4

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

The most powerful line for me in this Scripture is, "I will bless you ... so that you will be a blessing." God blessed Abram, but there were strings attached. God offered the gift of a blessing and then Abram was encouraged to give it away, to share it. That's the way things work in God's economy! I'm reminded that I can't just tightly hold onto the precious gift of God's blessing. My ordination to the sacred order of deacons was not simply an award for all my hard work at seminary. It was a sacramental blessing. God's intent was that I would use my ordination to do his work amongst his people, to be a blessing especially to those living "on the margins." Note that Abram was 75 years old when he received God's special blessing and charge. That's my age! We are never "too old" to find meaning and purpose in life—never "too old" to be a blessing to others! — Archdeacon Bruce Bower

Nov. 4, 2025 - John 15:1-5

Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

Jesus is telling his disciples that, to live with meaning, we must live in him. His analogy is that we are the branches on the vine, he is the vine, and God is the gardener. For us to produce fruit, we must actively seek out Christ to care for and nurture us, thus allowing us to produce the fruit of good works. The vine is useless unless it is connected to the branch. This connection must be unbroken and consistent. My challenge is that there are days when I do this ... and days when I assume that Christ will guide me, but I'm not listening or seeking his guidance. I lack consistency in applying and building my faith. The challenge is to not let the drought go on too long. — *Tim Cranor*

Nov. 5, 2025 - Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

This verse reminds me of our responsibility as parents and grandparents. By setting good examples for our children (and, for that matter, others around us), we can make a difference in the world as a whole. It may seem like a tiny difference at the time, but you can restore saltiness one grain of salt at a time. It's important to me to be a light at St. Andrew's, too, because you never know whom you'll encounter in any given day and how you may affect them. A smile can make a big difference in someone's day. — Mary Sanders

Nov. 6, 2025 - John 21:15-19

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time, he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

Why is this passage so important? Like all our conversations with God, Peter's conversation with Jesus has a backstory. It took place after the crucifixion, in Galilee, and was the last conversation between Jesus and Peter in the Gospel. In those three questions, Christ redeemed Peter for denying him three times before the crucifixion. This was the moment where Jesus affirmed Peter's ecclesiastical authority as the leader of his church on Earth and foretold his future martyrdom for the cause. By telling Peter to "feed my sheep," Jesus created the unbroken line of papal succession that exists to this day in the Roman Catholic church. And for Peter, Jesus replaced despair with purpose we can barely imagine. — Ben Gloe

Nov. 7, 2025 - Romans 8:28-30

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

God works in all things. God takes our trials and successes, joys and pains, and blends them so we can become more Christlike. That is our promise from God—that God's love is stronger than whatever it is we are walking through. It is with patience, trust, and a transformed heart that we can be conformed to the image of Christ. And as we become more Christlike, we become those who were called, justified, and glorified by God. — *Nina Edwards*

Nov. 8, 2025 - John 15:12-17

Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

This passage is both comforting and challenging for me. It has always been easier for me to think about God in the abstract than to imagine Jesus as a friend. The concreteness of that idea has felt implausible—even uncomfortable—and I admit I've been judgmental of phrases like, "I have a friend in Jesus." And yet, this past year, something has shifted. I had an experience where I felt Jesus' presence in a personal, human way, and since then I've called on my friend Jesus more than I ever have before. That friendship has stretched me, helped me, and comforted me in ways I never expected. What would it mean for you to receive Jesus' friendship as both a gift of comfort and a call to growth? — Mtr. Jean Long

Week 5:

Receive peace the world cannot give.

The love Gove gives us is different from the love we receive on earth because it's unconditional and eternal. As long as we believe in Christ, we should not be afraid but rather spread his love with a peaceful confidence. Conviction in your belief means conviction in your message. — *Ward Cook*

Nov. 9, 2025 - Luke 2:7-14

Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room. Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When Jesus is born, the angels appear to the shepherds and sing their heavenly song. We don't usually stop and wonder about both the audience and the lyrics. If God's army (which is what "heavenly host" means) appeared to an oppressed people to proclaim the birth of a king who would take on the empire, we might expect the audience to be the people's leaders and the message to be a promise of victory. Instead, God's commanders come to nobodies working the night shift, and their message isn't military victory but peace—the kind of peace the world can't give because it doesn't have it to give. I'll take that as a win any day. — Fr. John Spicer

Nov. 10, 2025 – John 14:27

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

During a time of turmoil, both in our nation and abroad, Jesus gives us the promise of interior peace. What a wonderful gift! This inner peace gives us the knowledge that God will always be with us, that his peace provides us the hope for a better tomorrow. Jesus' promise alleviates our fears, which encourages us to give our peace to others by standing up for justice and equality—to go outside

our comfort zone so that we can make a difference in another's life. — *Karen Lundgren*

Nov. 11, 2025 - Colossians 3:14-15

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

Forty years ago, I was newly attending church and would never have imagined the road that God would lead me to follow. This prayer from Thomas Merton's prayer book, *Through the Year*, spoke to me then and speaks to me now. I hope it will help lead you in peace and joy: "My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me ... nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone." — *Mtr. Anne Hutcherson*

Nov. 12, 2025 - Isaiah 54:10

For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

One of my favorite places to visit is the Grand Tetons in Wyoming. It's a beautiful mountain range that's breathtaking to witness in person. The fact that God's love is stronger than even mountains like the Tetons — vast, craggy, and resolute — says a lot about the God he is. God's love is everlasting, and even if the most immovable things on Earth were destroyed, like mountains and hills, it won't shake God's covenant with us. What a comfort to know that God has this much unconditional love and compassion for me, that even the sturdy Tetons cannot compare. It's relieving to know that no matter what mistakes I make, no matter what I'm struggling with, God's covenant is something I can always rely on. — *Tim Dodderidge*

Nov. 13, 2025 - Numbers 6:22-27

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

After an ordination, people will line up to receive a blessing from the newly ordained priest. After my own ordination, a line soon formed of those waiting for a blessing from this new priest. Bishop Diane Bruce, who had just ordained me, was at the head of the line. The blessing on the tip of my tongue was this one from Numbers 6: "The Lord bless you and keep you...." As I began this blessing with my hand on the bishop's head, I thought to myself, "This is too common; everyone knows this blessing; I should have a special one for the bishop!" These words are known as the Aaronic blessing. Through them, God promises to gaze upon us with pleasant approval. We receive God's graciousness. Because the priests, Aaron and his sons, obeyed God by praying this blessing, God promises to bless the people. On that day, when I obediently said this Aaronic blessing over Bishop Diane and others, in obedience to what God had commanded the priests to do, I did put God's name on those with whom I prayed, and God did just as God had promised. Bishop Diane and all with whom I prayed received God's blessing. — Mtr. Rita Kendagor

Nov. 14, 2025 - Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

This scripture is included in Compline, one of the daily offices in the *Book of Common Prayer* (p. 131). Every time I read it, I wonder how Jesus could possibly say his yoke is easy and his burden light, given his immense sacrifice of love. However, whenever two work animals of the same size are yoked together, pulling a plow through dirt is much easier than one animal going alone—or, worse yet, one smaller animal yoked with a larger animal. That is what makes this invitation from Jesus even more curious, as we, of course, will always be the "smaller animal!" But Jesus is willing to walk right alongside us, teaching us how to be more like him. It is indeed only within this relationship of trust and vulnerability that we find true rest, leaving our weariness behind. — *Carolyn Johnson*

Nov. 15, 2025 - Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. As for the things that you have learned and received and heard and noticed in me, do them, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul writes from prison yet calls us to rejoice. His joy is not in comfort but in Christ's presence. Prayer and thanksgiving open the way for God's peace, a peace the world cannot give and cannot take away. He tells us to set our minds on what is true, just, and good. What we dwell on shapes who we become. When we focus on God's goodness, the peace of Christ guards our hearts and minds each day. How will you make space to receive that peace this today? — Deacon Adam James

Week 6:

Receive God's blessings in this life.

If you commit to live every day of your life as God would want you to live your life, you will be blessed—blessed with his love and the love of others. This love will fill your heart and give you the guidance you need to walk with the Lord. — Ward Cook

Nov. 16, 2025 - Luke 6:38

Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

This verse prompts me to reflect on how much of my work as a consultant requires me to be critical, to identify gaps, pose challenging questions, and advocate for improvement. That's valuable in business, but I can see how it spills over into the rest of my life. I catch myself measuring others, and even myself, with a critical eye instead of a generous one. Jesus' words remind me that the measure I use matters. If I lead with encouragement, grace, and patience instead of critique, I might experience life in a different way. Shifting my perspective from what's lacking to what's good could change not only how others feel around me, but also how I feel about myself. Generosity in how I see and treat people may actually be the doorway to a fuller, more meaningful life. Where in your life are you most likely to measure with critique, and how might things change if you chose instead to measure with generosity? — *Scott Burditt*

Nov. 17, 2025 - Matthew 6:25-33

Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore, do not worry,

saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the gentiles who seek all these things, and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

The word "blessed" suggests a state of deep, spiritual happiness and fulfillment found in God's favor and redemption. Sadly, in my distant past, I found blessings or felt blessed only when something extraordinary happened—like the birth of a child, or a major financial windfall, or a Chiefs' Super Bowl victory. Thankfully, over the years, my wife, Joy, has helped me to see the blessings in small, everyday occurrences (hummingbirds, sunsets, special music, etc.). Still, I'm struck when I hear someone interviewed on the news who says they feel blessed even as they've suffered painful losses from natural disaster, been terribly injured in an accident, or experienced some other tragic circumstance. You've heard them, too. Those people exhibit a very healthy (and godly) mindset we should all pursue—to be aware of and thankful for God's blessings during ordinary times and in troubled times as well. I'm working on it. — Archdeacon Bruce Bower

Nov. 18, 2025 - 2 Corinthians 9:10-12

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us, for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

Gifts can take many forms—good health, abundant food, loving family and friends, a successful job, a safe home, money, the ability to communicate or work with our hands, empathy, and on and on. No matter what our gifts are, we need to share with others. The more we share, the more we receive. This summer, our 16-year-old granddaughter visited us at our Colorado cabin. During her visit, I taught her to drive a Jeep with a manual transmission. The time I spent teaching allowed me to see her face filled with pride and joy as she overcame the challenges of driving and shifting. It made me so proud of her and happy that I could spend time with her. God wants us to share our abundance so that we can grow as Christians and grow closer to him. Those gifts keep on giving like the stone tossed into a pond that generates concentric ripples. — *Tim Cranor*

Nov. 19, 2023 - Proverbs 11:24-25

Some give freely yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due and only suffer want. A generous person will be enriched, and one who gives water will get water.

I am a firm believer that when you help someone else, it's your life that's enriched. Helping others is a wonderful way to help yourself. Even small acts of kindness will be a blessing to someone but also to you. I think the act of giving financially has the same result. No matter how small a gift may be, generosity is something that feeds your soul. — *Mary Sanders*

Nov. 20, 2025 - Sirach 35:8-15

The offering of the righteous enriches the altar, and its pleasing odor rises before the Most High. The sacrifice of the righteous is acceptable, and it will never be forgotten. Be generous when you worship the Lord, and do not skimp the first fruits of your hands. With every gift show a cheerful face and dedicate your tithe with gladness. Give to the Most High as he has given to you and as generously as you can afford. For the Lord is the one who repays, and he will repay you sevenfold.

As Christians, it's our duty to give what we can offer to God. A tithe is a way for us to show God that this relationship is a two-way street. Before people had paper money, they would donate their crops, livestock, or whatever they had of value. As we're no longer supporting the Levites with our firstborn goats, we need to tithe in other ways to support God's work. Much of our relationship with God is connected to the house where we receive his Body and Blood. In 2025, it costs money to keep the lights on; and unlike the federal government, God isn't known for printing money. God is merciful, but he's also no fool. Dig a little deeper in those Levi's next time the plate comes around. — *Ben Gloe*

Nov. 21, 2025 - Proverbs 19:16-17

Those who keep the commandment will live; those who are heedless of their ways will die. Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord and will be repaid in full.

Following God's commandments is more than a lesson in dos and don'ts. The commandments create in us a servant heart, willingly obedient and compassionate. If we live in disobedience, then we are abusing God's gift of free grace. When we show compassion to those in need, it's as if we were showing compassion to the Lord himself. God will repay this compassion with abundant blessings. To live without compassion and obedience will lead to spiritual death.

- Nina Edwards

Nov. 22, 2025 - Galatians 6:7-9

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh, but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.

Paul reminds me that each choice I make plants something. I may not notice it right away, but over time the seeds I scatter take root. Some grow into habits that drain life; others grow into practices that bear love, joy, and peace. When I sow only to myself, it inevitably turns into a weed that keeps me from growing or finding peace. But when I sow to the Spirit, God brings about growth I could never accomplish on my own—and in that growth, I discover God's blessings already at work in this life. What small seed of the Spirit can you choose to plant today, trusting God to bring about growth and blessing? — Mtr. Jean Long

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