

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
 Advent II
 December 7, 2025
 rmcneely+

Advent; the coming.

Or perhaps the pre-coming

Our time of preparation for His coming.

There are two Advent themes and they are eloquently set forth in the Propers today;

St Paul reaches back to an ancient prophecy of Isaiah

“There shall be a root of Jesse

And He shall rise to reign . . .”

St Luke brings us Jesus’ words describing the final conflict

Between good and evil

At the end of time.

The two Advent themes:

His coming into the world as Saviour

And His coming into the world as Judge.

But there is a thread weaving through the day

An unmistakable focus on Holy Scripture; The Bible.

Paul’s Epistle’s opening verse,

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime

Were written for our learning”

Was the inspiration of Thomas Cramner in 1549 for today’s

Collect:

“Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures
 to be written for our learning”.

As so, this Sunday is known throughout the world among Anglican people of Faith as “Bible Sunday”.

And it has been my custom on Bible Sunday

To preach on The Holy Bible.

You may have heard that the Bible is the foundation of
Our liturgy
And church doctrine.

But I do not stand here each Sunday
and ask you to pull out your Bibles
and have you read scripture with me.
And I don't carry a well worn leather bound black Bible
With me and beat it as I preach on the Word of God.
As some of my clergy cousins do every Sunday.
And there are no Bibles in the book racks on the backs of the pews
As there are in other denominations
which are also Bible based.

So Holy Scripture is presented here
with much subtlety and nuance.
So much so, that you may not even recognize it.

Here at St Thomas' the music is so well done
and well selected that you might just have missed the fact
that The lyric of our hymns and anthems
are either scripture itself
or based upon the Bible.
The gradual (the music sung after the Epistle)
And the Communion Verse just before the priest receives
The Body and Blood of Christ,
Are Bible verses, selected for the season and the occasion.

The service begins with a summary of the Law
Right out of the Bible
And right from Jesus. His words.

The Epistle and Gospel are obviously read directly from the Bible

The Creeds are accurate summaries of the Life of Jesus
taken from the 4 Gospels.

The words of the offertory announcement are Bible verses.

The words of the consecration of the bread and wine
Are from St Paul and St Matthew.

The Lord's Prayer is from Matthew.

The prayer of humble access: "we are not worthy so much as to
gather up the crumbs under thy table"

Is from the story of the woman of Cyrene
Inspired by scripture.

The last part of that same prayer
echoes the teaching of Jesus
from the Gospel of St John;
that we must eat of His flesh and drink of His blood
if we are to obtain salvation and eternal life.

These and more are what convinced a high school friend of mine
Who became an evangelical minister,
That we encounter more scripture in our hour-long liturgy
That he can offer in his three-hour service
of song and preaching.

So yes. The Bible is our Foundation,
And our liturgy is packed with the Bible.

What is the role of the Bible in our lives
When we are not here at St Thomas'?

The Book of Common Prayer is intended to be used
not just on Sundays
but every day.

It should be worn and tattered in your home.

The Daily Offices;

Morning and Evening Prayer

Bring not only prayer life into your home

But a systematic reading of the Bible.

The Daily offices each involve a set of scripture

An Old Testament and a New Testament reading
for each service.

For each day of the year.

The Daily Offices are rich in the psalms and in prayer.

The Church encourages us every day in our homes

To spend those 15 minutes in the prayer

Of the Daily Offices

As a beginning and an ending to our day,

Immersed in Holy Scripture

If the Daily Offices are of interest to you,

Stop me and let's sit down

and I can show you how to use the Daily Offices

and the tables that tell you the daily psalms and lessons.

But more than that, our Holy Bible is much like an Owner's
Manual for our lives.

It is the source of morality and conscience

Nourishment of our souls

It is the foundation and building block

of our doctrine and religion.

Thomas Cramner put it well in today's Collect more than 475 years
ago:

“Grant that we may hear them

Read

Mark

Learn and inwardly digest them.’

Sometimes it feels very much like our understanding of scripture
 Is an organic experience,
 As if we have eaten it and it is being digested in our bodies,
 As we spend time
 and assimilate the words
 and their meaning in our lives.

Sometimes I feel I must take Holy Scripture in
 Roll it around in my mind
 And body in an almost physical sense,
 Before I can truly comprehend.

But Cranmer makes another observation
 “that by patience and comfort of thy Holy Word”.
 And here we must have another of those semantic/translation talks.

His word “patience”
 had a different meaning for him that it does for us.
 In the 16th Century
 “patience” meant; encouragement and
 “comfort” meant steadfast

So Cranmer was focusing us on the fact and praying that
 with the inspired
 urging and encouragement
 of the Holy Spirit within us
 and that by our steadfast
 enduring and persistent endeavors
 with Holy Scripture
 We may ever hold fast to the blessed hope of everlasting life.

And so it is with all scripture.
 The inspired word of God
 Inspires our liturgy
 Our sacraments and our lives.

We understand the Bible to be the inspired word of God.
 Written in the God-inspired word.
 That the Holy Spirit breathed into the words as the authors
 Inked the words on parchment.
 And that He breathes it out again as we read those words.

At this point you may ask yourself
 “What am I doing with the inspired word of God?”
 “How should I go about incorporating it into my life?”
 “Where do I start?”

Let me get practical for a moment.
 As much as we love the King James Version of the Bible
 Its poetry
 Its meter
 Its flowing language.
 It is a difficult read.
 Mostly because of the transformation of our language.

If you do not want to take on the task of translating it into modern terminology

Select from among the many other translations.
 That may be easier to read.
 But care must be taken
 to avoid some of the modern translations
 that have lost the original meaning.
 So take me aside and let's have a conversation
 about which one may be the best for you.
 The very best way to read the Bible is in a corporate setting
 Corporate as in a group of people sincerely
 Interested in learning.
 Say, the St Thomas' Bible Discussion Group
 (sorry, you knew it was coming
 the shameless commerce division
 of St Thomas' Church)

The group meets in the Church of the Air every Wednesday morning

At 9:30.

There are no homework assignments

No examinations or quizzes

No papers to write.

It's an easy and pleasant time among some of God's
Greatest people.

End of infomercial.

You may want to read the Bible from cover to cover.

But you will find that the history is difficult to follow

Because the Bible does not present the history in
chronological order.

So there are keys you can get that suggest which books to
read to put it in chronological order.

Much easier to follow the rich history
of the Children of God
when you read it from start to finish.

I also recommend you have with you a good commentary

At your side

That will guide and inform you.

You may find that Bible reading is a continual task

I don't think I will get to a point where I can say

I have now completed the task

And I am done.

It is more like a lifetime of learning.

Many times I encounter a passage that I have read before and
thought I knew,

However, I find a new nuance

New insight

That gives the words have more meaning.

You may find the same thing.

So on this Bible Sunday

Think about incorporating the Bible into your life.
Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest it.

It just might change your life.