

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR JANUARY 2024
Compiled by Rev Dr J Jack for the Congregation of Duddingston Kirk

**You will find reading the Bible rewarding and encouraging,
but reading the Bible is not always easy!**

These guidelines may help you.

Before you read each passage, ask God to speak to you through His Word.

Set aside a special time each day to read the Bible, and stick to it!

Make use of your Bible index to find readings – every Bible has a contents page.

Pray that what you have read will help you live according to God's wishes.

January 1st Romans 11:33-12:2

A Happy New Year! Let us dedicate ourselves to God's service in the year that is beginning. Not one of us knows what this year will hold for us. But God knows. No one can truly give thanks to God without, in response, giving ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, dedicated to God's service.

January 2nd Proverbs 3:1-10

Over-confidence is a great hindrance to a life truly dedicated to God. We feel we can manage on our own, we don't need God, our wisdom, strength and experience will meet our needs! How foolish! Our wisdom is utterly folly compared with the Divine wisdom.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS

January 3rd Luke 2:41-52

This is the only incident we know of the boyhood of Jesus. The visit to the Temple at the age of twelve was a most significant event in the life of a Jewish boy. It marked his transition from boyhood to young manhood. That is why he was not missed on the return journey. Mary, travelling with the women, would assume that he was with Joseph and the men, while Joseph assumed that he would be with Mary. How naturally Jesus thought of God as 'Father', and how wonderful it is in our own prayers when we can think of that same God, not as some great and mysterious power in the heavens, but as a loving merciful Father.

January 4th Matthew 3:1-12

John would probably be a man about 30 years of age when he began his ministry. We know that his mother Elizabeth was a cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus. John realized that the confession and forgiveness of sin was absolutely essential if one was to make any headway in the spiritual life. He also knew that his ministry was but a preparation for another who was to come after him. It is always an act of grace when a man realizes that there is another greater than himself. So often we want to play the principal role.

January 5th Matthew 3:13-17

If Jesus was perfect and knew no sin, why did he present himself for baptism, which was a cleansing from sin? We can only assume that Jesus was seeking to identify himself with those who were making a new beginning in the spiritual life, but for Jesus the baptism was of far greater significance than it had been for the others. Verses 16 and 17 may seem strange to us, yet we will make no headway in the spiritual life until we accept that such events are possible and real.

January 6th Matthew 4:1-11

That the moment of spiritual elation of which we were reading yesterday is followed by a time of temptation. This is a common experience for the Christian. We have some great uplifting experience and we feel that God has never been so close – and then next day we succumb to temptation of some kind and are filled with shame and remorse.

January 7th John 1:19-36

John, at this point, is rather like many members of the Church. He knows that there is someone greater and mightier than he has ever met before, yet one gets the impression that he is not exactly sure just who that someone is. So today there are many in the Church who confidently believe in ‘something’ yet who are unable to be more precise or definite. Always we must be frank and honest when speaking out our faith. We are dishonouring God if we pretend to something of which we are uncertain, or substitute our personal ideas and opinions for the truth.

January 8th John 1:35-49

John himself realized that he was not the one people were really seeking. He pointed them away from himself to Christ – ‘Behold the Lamb of God’. Sometimes others will be attracted into the fellowship of the congregation through their friendship with us, but we must seek the earliest opportunity to persuade them to find the One whom they are really seeking- Jesus.

January 9th John 2:1-11

We are told that this is the first miracle Jesus performed and what a strange miracle it is! What does it signify? First of all we must be perfectly confident that Jesus is not pandering to the alcoholic thirst of the wedding guests. Jesus takes dull and rather tasteless water and transforms it into rich full-bodied wine. In the very same way Jesus can take the unspectacular and ordinary lives which so many of us lead and transform them into vital and meaningful experiences which only He can give.

January 10th John 2:13-25

In John’s Gospel the cleansing of the Temple comes early in the ministry of Jesus, whereas in the other three places it is near the close of His ministry. Which was it? Jesus discovered very early in His ministry that there was something very far wrong in the ‘official’ religious life of the nation. This appears to be His first visit to Jerusalem since the beginning of His ministry and it may be that He sees with a clarity He never knew before the insincerity and corruption which can so easily creep in to the religious life.

January 11th John 3:1-21

‘No one can see the Kingdom of God UNLESS he is born again’. It is no accident that John places this incident immediately after the cleansing of the Temple. There are so many who think that, if they clean out this impure thought or stop doing some selfish deed, then they have done all that is required. Such cleansing is only half the process. It is not enough to stop the old way of life. There must be a new beginning, a new birth.

January 12th John 4:1-26

Notice how Jesus is willing to give His whole attention to just one woman, and how willing He is to cross both the political and social barriers. The woman was a Samaritan, and her private life was somewhat irregular, yet Jesus gently but firmly guides her to the discovery of who He really is. There are great lessons to be learned here on the matter of sharing our faith.

January 13th John 4:27-42

The woman races home to tell her neighbours. v.39 – many in that town believe, v.41 – many more believed. The faith of that one woman had a tremendous impact on the people of that town. Mary Slessor used to say, ‘God plus one is always a majority’. Where God can find one willing and obedient heart, there is also no limit to what can be accomplished.

January 14th John 4:43-54

Here is the second miracle in Cana. In the first He took water and transformed it into wine. Now, in the second, He takes a dying child and a stricken home and transforms weakness into health and strength, deepest sorrow into a glowing faith.

January 15th Luke 4:16-24

Jesus is now back in the town where He had grown up as a boy and worked as a carpenter. In the synagogue He takes a quite remarkable passage from Isaiah applying it to Himself. Jesus is in effect saying, ‘This is Me. This is My work. This is what God has called Me to do.’ Look at the reaction of those who had known Him all their lives. They admired His eloquence, and they saw Him as the son of Joseph. So today there are many who see Jesus as a good teacher, a kind man, a favorite with children, a fine storyteller – but nothing more.

January 16th Luke 4:28-32

The people rose up against Jesus and made an attempt on His life. In every generation there are those who react violently against the messengers of God. In every generation there are those who want to cut Jesus down to their own size – the carpenter’s son. To accept Him as the Son of God only heightens their own sense of guilt, and that is unacceptable. Jesus never forces Himself into a situation where He is not welcome.

January 17th Mark 1:16-20

Through Sunday School, attendance at worship, and through our own reading of the Gospel, we are coming to know Jesus, but there comes a time in the lives of each one of us when we are challenged to change over from being merely a learner to being a follower, a disciple. It is a challenge that may be either accepted or rejected.

January 18th Luke 5:1-9

Simon and the others were experienced fishermen. They knew when the conditions were right for fishing, and they also knew when it was virtually useless to make the attempt. Simon had also discovered that Jesus possessed wisdom and an insight that was far greater than mere human wisdom. When something is done in obedience to Christ, it is always successful. The more a man or woman comes to know Jesus then two things happen. First, one becomes aware of the power and the love and the grace of Christ. Secondly, one becomes aware of how frail and sinful one is by comparison.

January 19th Luke 4:31-37

Many are puzzled that evil spirits should be able to recognize Jesus as ‘God’s holy messenger’ Evil spirits, by their very nature, are aware of the presence of Divine Spirit. Divine spirit is so totally different from them that they cannot avoid recognizing it where it is present. Notice that the evil spirits always obey the command of the Divine Spirit. They must, because, strong though they are, the Divine Spirit is stronger still. This is why the Christian Gospel is the only means by which the evil that is in the world can be overcome.

January 20th Luke 4:38-41

Here we have a reference to Simon Peter's mother-in-law so obviously Peter was married! This is the time when Jesus was immensely popular, and crowds came to Him wherever He went, mainly for healing. Do many of us not do the same? We turn to God in prayer only when we have some special request we wish granted.

January 21st Luke 5:12-16

Leprosy was a disease, which led to horrible disfigurement. People recoiled at the sight of a leper. It was reckoned to be so infectious that those who contracted the disease were forced to leave their homes and to avoid all contact with non-sufferers. This applied even to kings. Lepers were banned from all places and ordinances of worship. It was a disease, which led ultimately to death. Can you imagine what it would mean to such a man that Jesus would speak to him, should touch him, should heal him?

January 22nd Luke 5:17-26

How determined they were to bring their friend to Jesus they even tore a hole in the roof! How anxious are we that our friends should know Jesus? The world will never know just how much has been accomplished by the quiet men and women who, day by day, lift up their fellow men and women to the throne of grace.

January 23rd Luke 5:27-32

In those days tax collectors were regarded with almost the same amount of distaste as lepers. They were regarded as traitors because they worked for the Roman occupying forces. The very nature of their work gave them ample opportunity to cheat and to line their own pockets and most of them made full use of every such opportunity. This is why some complained when Jesus made friends of some tax collectors. They were further shocked when Jesus made one of these collectors one of His disciples.

January 24th John 5:1-18

We might have expected everyone to be overjoyed that a poor sick man was healed, but there were those who saw his healing as a transgression of the Sabbath law. How easily the organisation and structure of the Church can come to be more important than people. The Jewish authorities were privileged to have God's power revealed before their very eyes, but they didn't recognize it for what it was. They could only see that one of their laws was being broken.

January 25th John 5:19-29

Jesus declared that what He does is not by some personal power He has developed but by a power that has been given Him by His Father in Heaven. In other words, criticize Jesus and you are criticizing God! These words are not difficult to either read or understand yet they are so simple that we fail to grasp their truth. Jesus is saying that whoever hears His words, and believes in the One who sent Him, has eternal life.

January 26th Matthew 12:1-8

Plucking the ears of ripe grain was officially regarded as work, and therefore was illegal on the Sabbath. Jesus answered His critics by reminding them that even the great King David once allowed his men to do something similar on the Sabbath. Jesus claims in v.8 to be the Lord of the Sabbath.

January 27th Matthew 12:9-13

There are some in the synagogue for no other reason than to criticize. Still today it is possible for men and women to sit in the pew in a judgmental attitude. Jesus knows what they are doing, and so He heals the man almost as an act of defiance. He is accepting their challenge. He is healing and restoring to life, but they can only kill.

January 28th

Mark 3:7-12

We see first the tremendous popularity of Jesus and also the tremendous need there was for His healing power. One might have thought that the religious authorities would have been pleased that so much good was being done, and they might have done what they could to promote it and advance it. But no – their established way of doing things was being challenged and it had to be resisted.

January 29th

Mark 3:13-18

These men were introduced to Jesus, then they were challenged by Him, now they are ordained and commissioned. They are to be called ‘apostles’, men under authority, ‘sent out’ to do Christ’s work. They are to preach the Good News and also have authority to drive out evil spirits. Nowadays the Church concentrates on only one of these divinely appointed tasks. The other is, by and large, neglected. Yet it is just as relevant in this modern 21st century as it ever was, and just as necessary.

January 30th

Matthew 5:1-11

Having appointed His disciples, Jesus now takes them privately and teaches them. The disciples had to be taught and so must we. The Christian life is not some natural instinct, as so many mistakenly believe. These Beatitudes are not easy for those who have not yet reached the stage when they are relevant. Indeed, for many they are nonsensical, but for the man or woman of faith they are the very Word of God.

January 31st

Matthew 8:5-13

The great message of this miracle is that it was performed over a distance. The power of Christ can reach out to those in need. Race is no barrier, neither is poverty or distance for the love of God is extended to all.