

“Cleanse the Thoughts of our Hearts.” The Prayer Book Collects as a pattern for Personal Prayer.

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[0 : 00] Good to be with you again this morning. The talk I'm giving this morning is going to be partly a talk. It's partly going to be a workshop. I'm going to set you to work. I thought we'd do something interactive, seeing with the time change this morning.

You might be a little tired. And also, I really did want to... It's really one idea that I'd like to explore with you about how to extend our Anglican formation in worship into our private lives, in our private devotional lives, and our reading of Scripture.

And so the revised title for the talk here, I forget what I actually wrote for the bulletin, but it's Turning Scripture into Prayer, the Anglican Colics as Models for Devotional Reading.

So that's what we're going to talk about. When I was 15 or 16 years old in Winnipeg, I grew up in Winnipeg, grew up in a Bible-teaching Baptist church, a wonderful formation as a Christian.

But there used to be a children's hospital book sale at Polo Park Shopping Mall, where they would sell used books every year for a couple weeks and had the different stalls. And every year when I went, I would buy another wine-colored 1962 Anglican Book of Common Prayer because they were only 25 cents.

[1 : 22] And so I ended up with a whole bunch of these. And when I think back, I think that's when I probably began my own interest, fascination. And at first it was almost a kind of antiquarian interest, you know, trying to figure this book out.

Later, as a student at Regent College in the 1980s, I began using the Book of Common Prayer for my own private devotional life. So in some ways I came at this sort of opposite from a cradle Anglican.

And sometimes there's a danger for cradle Anglicans that you become inoculated so you never catch the real thing. And I came the other direction with a fascination and a growing interest and a deepening desire.

You know, Cranmer's immortal prose and the beauty of it, but also the doctrine, the devotion, the history. And I just, before long, you could see my fingernail marks on the paving stones as I was being dragged into the Anglican church.

And in due course, my wife and I, Carolyn and I became Anglican. So that was my kind of personal introduction to the prayer book.

[2 : 32] But what I want to talk about specifically this morning is these colics, these curious, these interesting, dense little prayers that if you're not careful, if you're not really concentrating in the worship service, they blow past pretty fast.

And where do these come from and how might these help us think about worship and devotion? The term colic in the prayer book might seem odd to you sometimes.

And in a quiet moment in the service, when your mind is wandering, you might speculate about why are they called colics? These prayers that, some of them are fixed and reappear in regular times in morning prayer and evening prayer in Holy Communion.

Some of them change with the church year. Why are they called colics? These are very old prayers and a very old form of prayer. And some speculated that they were connected to the use of the Latin word *collecta* for the assembly or the gathering of the congregation for worship, the gathering of the people, as we say.

But the term as a title for this form of prayer actually goes way back to the early 6th century, the 500s, in the so-called Gallican Rite.

[3 : 53] And this would be the form of liturgical worship used outside of the Roman tradition, predominantly in Gaul or France. There was a synod in France, not a well-known synod, in the year 506 that made clear that the term *collect* in one of its canons, *collect* referred to the collecting of the petitions of several members of the congregation into a single prayer.

So it's a gathering, and in a sense it is a gathering of the people, but a gathering of all our petitions together into this prayer and offering it up to God in the worship service. It's a form of prayer that doesn't appear in the liturgies of the Eastern Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Greek Church.

But they begin to appear very early in the West, beginning in the 400s. So these prayers, we pray at St. John's, some of them are about 1,600 years old.

Old prayers. Friends, these prayers are even older than Jim Packer. They first appear in Latin service books that are called sacramentaries, and these sacramentaries were named after some of the early popes, the Leonine, the Glacian, or the Gregorian sacramentaries.

And at first, these prayers were always directed to the Father. Since the Middle Ages, as prayers were regularly added, there were more, some of these prayers were directed to the Son.

[5 : 26] When the English Book of Common Prayer was compiled by Thomas Cranmer, he and others freely modified and they adapted some of these old colics, mostly from an English service book called the *Serum*, *Missal*, and *Breverie*.

And they wrote new ones. So it was partly an adaptation, certainly a translation into English, into the vernacular, freely modified, and given good English rhythm and cadence.

Have you noticed, by the way, that Cranmer really likes doubles? He says things twice? You know, *erred and strayed*, *devices and desires*, and so on.

And if you start thinking, you'll realize that he often uses, just in the rhythm of his prose, will use pairs of words. Many have commented on the beauty of the language of the prayer book.

This golden age of the English language deriving from the age of Shakespeare. So the prayer book is, for many Anglicans, Cranmer's immortal bequest.

[6 : 27] My favorite witness to the beauty of its language comes from the pop song by Paul Simon, you know, Simon and Garfunkel, Paul Simon. And he has a song called *That Was Your Mother*, I think it's on the *Graceland* album, sung to his child about when he first met the child's mother in Louisiana.

And this is the stanza from the song. He says, *Along came a young girl, she's pretty as a prayer book, sweet as an apple on Christmas Day. I said, Good gracious, can this be my luck?*

If that's my prayer book, Lord, let us pray. And so even in a pop song, you get this reference to the beauty of the prayer book. One of the dangers of prayer book devotion for Anglicans is it can become plummy and literary.

And I think the very literary quality and the beauty of the prose can lead one to a kind of literary, there can be a bit of distancing sometimes in the very literary nature of the prayer book.

And it can become a surrogate for the real thing, just to kind of enjoy the language. And even though, as I'll say, I very much want to celebrate the union of doctrine, discipline, and devotion in prayer book worship.

[7 : 39] Doctrine, content, discipline, form, devotion, aspiration. These things seem to be held together in a wonderful way in a prayer book.

I'll just mention there's a few books I'll refer to this morning. This one, Bigger Than Lord of the Rings, is an anthology of Anglican devotional texts called Love's Redeeming Work compiled by three bishops.

One of them was my former supervisor at Oxford, Geoffrey Rowell. And if you kind of read through this or even kind of just dip into the extracts, you realize here's almost five centuries of Anglican devotional writing people formed in prayer book worship.

And it just, you can see with the continuity here is formation in the prayer book. And it's reflected in private devotion as well, such as Lancelot Andrews' private prayers.

And you can just see how people are shaped by the prayer book. It's kind of an Anglican Philokalia. If some of you know, there's a collection of texts from the Eastern Church called the Philokalia.

[8 : 45] And this is sort of an Anglican Philokalia. So on the one hand, there's the entry into doctrine, discipline, and devotion. And there's the literary beauty of the prayer book.

And over against that, we want to affirm what Paul and the author of the book of the Hebrews used the word *parisía* for boldness of approach and freedom of address.

And I think there's a wonderful freedom of extemporaneous prayer, homemade prayers, and the cry of the heart. *Parisía* in Greek is the freedom of the citizen to speak in the assembly, the rights of the citizen to speak.

And we have *parisía* or boldness to directly approach God in prayer. But I think for those of us formed as evangelicals, we're kind of familiar with that.

We expect to pray in our own words with extemporaneous prayer. And it can be helpful to go back to the colics and say, how can we sort of balance that or find a kind of rhythm between just praying to God freely but also praying out of this liturgical tradition?

[9 : 53] We are deeply formed by how we pray in public. And this is a great group. I would like you to complete some sentences for me. And I'm sure you can do this.

So just shout out loud and complete the sentence. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by O Lord, our Heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God who has brought us to the beginning of this day.

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred. Mr. David, Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we, Thine, unworthy servants, do Okay, that one was tougher.

It doesn't occur as often. But it becomes a part of you. And you may even find that phrases sort of come back to you at different times because it becomes a part of your, your whole psychology becomes kind of imprinted, becomes impregnated with this language.

And it forms us as people. It forms us as Christians in an Anglican *paideia* or culture or kind of formation. And so the job this morning is to see if we can extend this into our private devotional life.

[11 : 01] We can use this as a springboard for our prayerful reading of scripture in private. I found it immensely helpful just to learn more about the basic form of a collect.

To recognize that it has a form like a sonnet. And once I recognized this form, I found it much easier in worship here at St. John's to actually track with the prayers, to actually follow them.

And I'm going to start this handout around, now there's two pages, okay, so make sure you get both pages. And you can just pass that around. I didn't have time to staple those this morning.

This is from the first page. And so here's the basic form of a collect. The address, addressing God, the title we use to address God directly.

the acknowledgement, which would be the doctrine or the theme from scripture. Because the collects for each Sunday of the church year respond to the lessons or the gospel or the epistle for that day.

[12 : 09] We'll talk about that in a minute. But there's actually an acknowledgement or a doctrine on the basis of which we then make a petition. And that petition is couched within or nested within a further aspiration.

Okay? A further aspiration, a further desire yet, and finally a pleading through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives with you and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and forever. Amen. Alright?

So that's the form. And just to illustrate it here, the call for purity from the Holy Communion, Almighty God, so addressing God, in this case, addressing Him as exalted, as mighty, as almighty.

And then, what can we say that's true about God? What can we say, what doctrine is going to be the basis for this prayer? unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden.

Right? We know that that's true. And we affirm it in prayer. Often it might be a relative pronoun like who. Almighty God who?

[13 : 18] You know, or, but there's a doctrine that follows, and on the basis of which we make the petition, this is often the main nerve of the sentence, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit.

And then it's usually the conjunction that is a purpose clause, that we may perfectly love Thee and worthily magnify Thy holy name, and then the pleading through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And Cranmer usually just puts et cetera at that point. In other words, live with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, however, amen. Right? That is always a Trinitarian prayer.

It's true Christ in the Holy Spirit to the Father. So, now, like other forms of poetry, you don't always find all these elements and they get moved around, and sometimes the pleading might be a little bit different, sometimes the purpose clause might not be there, sometimes, like the call for the first Sunday in Advent, you can't really pick these apart even though they're kind of all there in quite this way.

But, one of the ways to think about this is the form of prayer moves from past, what can we say about what God has done in the past or what's been affirmed in the past, what has been revealed to us in the past, from the past to the present to the future.

[14 : 42] That's always the movement of salvation history, of God saving work from the past, the present, the future. Or you could say, God, I look back, I look up, and I look ahead.

Or, it's faith, love, and hope. What is there to be believed in this scripture passage? What is there to be believed?

What is that which I desire? And how is this nested within something greater that I hope for? Right? So you see the form of it, and once you pick up this form and this movement and this rhythm in worship, as you hear the call out for the day, even if it's not written in the bulletin or even if you have it open to the prayer book, you can kind of follow it more easily and put your own heart into that movement.

Now, let's look at some of the examples on the handout, and I've got a couple exercises for you here.

The first one is I've given you four colics from the prayer book, and the first one is the colic for the season that we're in, the colic for Lent, for Ash Wednesday, and let's do this one together, and then I'll let you work on the other ones.

[16 : 17] In this case, I've just given you a few historical notes here. This one is composed by Cranmer to replace a pre-Reformation prayer that emphasized fasting. Yes?

Bruce, do you have any more of these? Did I not do enough? Oh, I did. Were there any left over on this side? Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't do quite enough.

Maybe some of you could look on and share, and we could have a few more back there. I did 40. I wasn't so optimistic that so many people would set their clocks correctly.

Does everybody have one to look on to now? Does anybody not have one to look on to at least? Okay. So the call up for Ash Wednesday, the address, Almighty and Everlasting God, and then looking back, or a doctrine, and here again it's the relative pronoun who, what can we remind ourselves about this Almighty and Everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent.

Isn't that wonderful to affirm that? And here's a kind of prayer that is not just a geyser of feeling. It's not just beginning and sitting down and asking God for what you want.

[17 : 49] It's not just, there's a satirical magazine called Wittenberg Door, and it has some of these cartoons in it, and there's a couple of them that sort of poke fun at the way in which in a popular evangelical culture our prayers can be a little bit vacuous, and the two, sorry to do this as a parenthesis, the two that just came to mind are, one is this very excited new Christian who says, I just accepted Keith Green at a Jesus concert, and this kind of gush of feeling, but the other one is he says, Lord, I just really want to ask you, Lord, to just really help me stop saying just and really in my prayers.

And so there's nothing wrong with that, right? I'm not cynical about prayers that, you know, just trying to express our own, talk to God in our own language, in our own mother tongue, but these kinds of prayers can train us, these kind of prayers can help us and can deepen our prayers.

So in this case, it's not just a gush of feeling, and it's not just beginning with whatever's on my mind, but I remind myself what is true about God, and this is of course just quoting scripture, just a katana of scripture texts, God hate us nothing that he has made, that's from the Psalms, just forgive the sins of all them that are penitent.

I know that's true. On the basis of that, the third, then we have the acknowledgement, then we have the petition, and of course this is out of Psalm 51, create and make in us new and contrite hearts, and then there's the word that, the conjunction that signals a purpose clause of the aspiration.

I'm asking for a new and contrite heart to what further end? That we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness.

[19 : 49] So you see how it moves, and you can kind of follow from the word who that signals the doctrine, to the main verb create, which signals the petition, to the conjunction that, which signals the aspiration, and then the pleading through Jesus Christ our Lord, and then usually the rest of it is just assumed, so I put it in square brackets, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

All right? So the exercise, the first exercise I have for you is just to, I've given you the collect for the second Sunday in Advent that was also composed by Cranmer, and this is sometimes called the collect for Bible Sunday, because of its focus on the Bible.

The collect for the fourth Sunday after Trinity, which is an old one from the Gregorian sacramentary, and then the call to the sixth Sunday after Trinity, which is even older, back to the Glacian sacramentary.

But what I'd like you to do is just kind of divide it into those five divisions, and see if you can find those five divisions that we talked about. I'll leave this on here so you don't have to flip back to that page.

All right? So just to give you a couple minutes just to practice, like a sonnet, dividing it into quatrains, or see if you can divide this. You'll be graded on this afterwards.

[21 : 27] I used to teach a high school, Sunday school class. I was telling Rod in Winnipeg, and I used to give them exams. And when they complained, I told them, just think how badly you'll feel if you have to repeat a year in Sunday school.

I'm sorry if this seems overly grammatical, but I just want us to mainly catch the rhythm from past through the present to the future, from doctrine through petition to aspiration, and from a theme in Scripture, a prayer in light of it, and a desire for heaven.

All right, even if you're quite finished, why don't we walk through this together, and the call up for the second Sunday in Advent, let me read the prayer. Blessed Lord, who has caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by the patience and comfort of thy holy word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which thou hast given us in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

So where would you place the divisions here? Anybody? Anybody? What's that? Who? Right? So the doctrine begins after blessed Lord, comma, we have the address, and then who has caused all Scripture to be written for our learning.

And then do you have the request or petition beginning with the word grant? Yeah. Right? And then that wonderful phrase, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest.

[23 : 19] And then do you have the next, the aspiration beginning after that with the word that? Right. Okay. And then this one doesn't really have the same closing.

It says in rather than through Jesus Christ. And so I don't know if you would usually end this likewise with the formula in the square brackets above. As I say, they don't always have all the elements.

Good. What about the next one? Anybody? How did you divide this one? Yeah. And then from the protector all the way through to where?

Increase. So increase is the actual main verb. This is what we're asking. Oh God, increase and multiply thy mercy on us.

And then there's two clauses that begin with the word that, aren't there? That thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not things eternal.

[24 : 32] So it would be the first word that would begin the aspiration. We want to pass through things temporal that we finally lose not things eternal. And see the way it moves? It moves towards heaven.

It moves towards the desire for things eternal for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. And then finally, the last one, we have that word who again early on and then we have the word that and in between it the main verb.

So did you mark it Oh God and then who has prepared? And then after the colon the request is to pour into our hearts and then the aspiration that begins that we lovingly above all things may obtain the promises than finally through Jesus Christ our Lord.

See, you can get into a kind of habit with this, right? You can kind of hear it coming. Now as Dan or Jim or David pray these for us, we can kind of hear them as they come.

Excellent. Now what I want to let me just mention a couple other books before I go much further. for the 450th anniversary of the Book of Common Prayer Paul Zoll and Frederick Barbee from the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, Birmingham, Alabama they prepare the colics of Thomas Cranmer and it goes through the colics for each Sunday of the year and there's just a little historical note and then a meditation and it kind of takes you through the year and so and there's a little introduction at the beginning which has some of this bit about the form here and so I just I commend that to you you can come up and take a look at it if you want these are available at the at the Regent Bookstore but if you would just like to delve a little bit deeper into the colics or to use them for your own devotional reading or to every Sunday maybe as a as a Sabbath exercise just meditate on the colic for that day that's one book I wanted to commend to you and then on sacred reading

[26 : 46] Lectio Divina praying scripture whatever you want to call it a prayerful reading of scripture the best kind of accessible book I've seen on this is this one by Michael Casey called Sacred Reading the Ancient Art of Lectio Divina Lectio Divina is just fancy Latin for prayerful reading prayerful reading of the Bible something every Christian does intuitively I think if they think about it but it he is a Cistercian monk in sort of formed in monastic prayer from Australia and he's written a couple books on prayer but he he makes the connection and this is what sort of got me going on this he has a whole section on actually how you practice a prayerful reading of scripture and in the chapter that's practical about how you do this one of the suggestions is writing a prayer in response to what you're reading so and he suggests using the form of the collect he says we encapsulate the experience of a particular reading in a collect that we can use afterwards as a means of returning to that experience so often as we're reading scripture devotionally day by day you want to respond to what you're reading you want to read this as God addressing you personally and how do you do that he suggests that you use the form of the collect and he says simplicity is the key we have little difficulty if we take the traditional model for a liturgical prayer having these elements and then it's these same ones that I talked about so here's an example he gives two examples if we're reading through the events of the exodus reading about the exodus he says we might pray this way just in a prayer journal oh God of all the living when your people were hungry you fed them with manna give us this day our daily bread and may our trust in your providence never falter we ask this through Jesus

Christ our Lord it's just a simple structure of past present and future I look back I look up I look ahead what do I believe what do I desire what do I hope for out of this passage and you see how you can naturally be led in your own words to something like a collect and then you want to pray that through Jesus in the Holy Spirit to the Father or he says our reflection on Jesus cleansing of the temple may lead us to formulate the following petition in this case to Christ himself to the Son Lord Jesus Christ you were consumed with zeal for the integrity of God's house purify your church today from all that defiles and disfigures it and give us a clean heart so that we may see God for you are our Lord forever and ever amen right just that kind of when you get in the groove like this you can find that you're shaped to pray on the basis of what you know is true but then to respond to it and to aspire and in so doing our hearts are formed by our reading of scripture because it's really easy isn't it you read the bible and you just kind of forget about it and go into your day and then you almost you know by the time the night comes you've forgotten what you've read in the morning and so this would be a way to take our Anglican formation together as Christians and extend it into our private devotional lives you might begin with just whatever the passage is for

Sunday that's being preached on and it could be a Sabbath exercise to go home and re-read the passage think about the sermon and then respond like this and sometimes it may be that it becomes habitual enough you can do it without writing things down but it might be a good exercise also to write it down for most of us that's probably where we need to begin so I have another exercise here for you to have some practice in a minute but just before we do that why don't I stop for questions or comments that you'd like to make and I know there's many people here who have a much longer formation as Anglicans than I do and many people in this church who are students of the prayer book and I just look at a few sources to try to find out a little bit about college but any comments anything you'd like to add or questions at this point is this new to you or is this common knowledge I'm not sure because I'm not a cradle

Anglican yeah so classically people talk about Lectio reading the text and I'll begin to read the text Meditatio meditation I begin to mull over the text Orosio I begin to pray over the text and contemplatio I rest in awareness of God's presence here with me it's presence sort of from dispersively meditating and pray to the goal is really to be present to God and God present to me so there's a kind of movement there it's not that you guys go now I'm reading now I'm meditating now I'm praying but you're aware that a devotional reading scripture naturally moves to prayer any other comments or questions I was surprised

I used to go to St. Simon's and there was a particular service where it was genomic activity and I realized they had wrote this stuff right now I always thought I'm very trying but I always thought they were stuck in the mass sort of thing but they're not necessarily Do you know the framework that you have some Yarislam Pelican that tradition is the living faith of dead people traditionalism is the dead faith of living people and I think what we're trying to do is to draw this condition this richness that's been given to us and to find a way to be living Christians today and let this form us and I think it's wonderful this union of doctrine discipline and devotion that there's lots of aspiration lots of longing like lots of feeling here but it's not divorced from doctrine and it's not divorced from porn and discipline either keeping the fire in the fireplace so I think yeah it's not either just sort of being modern or being traditional you want people anybody else okay you're going to work now what I copied out for you on the next page is the text that

[34 : 05] Keith Ganzer preached from last week in Acts 20 Paul's farewell address to the Ephesians the elders of the Ephesian church it's a longer text but I printed it out in full for you to read over and meditate on and you might think back to some of the points that Keith made last week he talked about what it means to serve the Lord and he talked about serving the Lord that verse 19 to what leaders being characterized all of us called to serve the Lord by being characterized by humility he says you want leaders who will cry with humility with tears and talked about the trials and being willing to endure trials and so on but in Paul's farewell address you get a strong sense of mission a strong sense of his aspirations there might be something there you pick up on in terms of aspiration there's lots you could look at here where you go okay if that's true how can

I respond to that in prayer and I'm not suggesting necessarily that you respond to the whole thing you might just want to take out I mean there be hundreds of prayers that could be written in response to this and it might just be a specific theme that you pick out a specific phrase you pick out as the doctrine to which you respond to the petition might also rise naturally out of the text but what I suggest that you do for this exercise is you think what do I believe on the basis of this text what do I desire after reading this text and what do I hope for and use that as a kind of structure and see if you can write out a prayer in the form of a collect I've given you kind of one to five there I'll put this back up but can I give you a few minutes to do this and the back side is blank so feel free if you're a quick study and want to take several attempts and want to write a couple of these but I'm going to give you a full sort of ten minutes here to kind of work through this and see if you can begin to respond so I told you

I was going to put you to work and so here it is why don't you see if you can respond in the form of a collect everybody have a pencil or a pen all right I see many of you still writing kind of working away at this are we far enough that you could just share what you've written with the person beside you just compare what you've done are you far enough along why don't we do that why don't you just turn to the person beside you in two or three and just compare what you've written can I come in over top of your conversations here

I noticed when I came in this morning over coffee you're a group that loves to talk that's good don't have to prime the pump too hard what's that okay need Gordon P to shout alright I wrote a couple here while we were talking and it was let me share one with you that I wrote one that was more personal and one that was kind of for the church there's lots of ways we might do this and we aren't grading these these are just our own responses but I wrote I tried to pick out some phrases in the passage I noticed that God's grace is referred to twice so I wrote God of grace you gave the church an apostle who was not afraid to weep for the church help me to enter into the sufferings and needs of my fellow Christians like this that I might follow Paul's example and be the sort of Christian more concerned to give than to receive through

Jesus Christ our Lord so that was more personal prayer for me I was quite struck after Keith's sermon about that phrase I did not shrink and I thought I'm kind of tempted to shrink back sometimes especially if I get hurt I kind of shrink back and I don't enter deeply as deeply as I should into people's needs so that's one response I wrote another one that was more about thinking of leaders and the whole church God of grace who desires leaders that will serve you humility and compassion like Paul grant that I and all our leaders and all our people at St.

[39 : 08] John's might declare your whole council always with such hearts of love such tears and such humility that we all might come to the inheritance of the sanctified through Jesus Christ our Lord right I I is there somebody else that would like to share just how you responded I'd love to hear a few of these if you don't mind anybody could share some of how you responded we all are going to in a sense it's the same scripture and the teaching of the scripture is there but we're all going to respond from our own kind of out of our own experience and try to appropriate this I'd love to hear some of the rest of you anybody what you can do is sometimes why we why you know teachers get you to talk to the other person next is I can always call on the person next to you to tell me what you said right go ahead yeah wonderful yeah

Yeah. Wonderful. Wonderful. Thank you.

Thank you. That's great. Great. Anybody else? I double-dogged area.

Yeah, thanks. I'm wondering what to do with my life next year. Okay. God, whose Spirit didn't leave Paul confused, but compelled him in the direction of your will, show me at the proper time where I am to go, so that I may show your glory.

And for those to whom I am, through Jesus Christ our love. Wonderful. Thank you. Isn't that wonderful to see how our lives in real time connect with our reading of Scripture? Right?

[41 : 33] And that's very helpful. Anybody else have one that maybe is sort of different than that or picked up on a different theme? Rod?

I'll venture out into unknown territory. All right. I just started off, picked up that last paragraph of Paul Sparrow.

Yeah. He's an elder, and he said, Almighty God who can build us up and give us an inheritance so that we may have all our needs supplied. May we realize it is more blessing to give than receive who Jesus Christ our love.

Wonderful. Yeah, thank you. That's great. Yeah. Mine kind of talks about Providence.

I've been for the last several years praying for my son, who is at the University of Victoria. There's a prayer at the back of the prayer book that prays for children who have gone forth from us.

[42 : 34] And it starts out, well, God's refuge and strength, all of us to trust in you. And I think about, who actually does that? Who says that? Yeah. God is my refuge and strength, and I don't try and look to my own strength.

So a lot of this spoke to Resting in God's Providence to me. I didn't get the last line, but anyway. Almighty and ever-present God, whose providence is apparent and lovely, created me an attitude of rest in this providence, that I may look longingly for whatever you have created for me to accomplish in your power.

I like the way it picks up on Paul's sense of, Paul has to leave the Ephesian church in God's hands. You know, I've declared to you the whole counsel of God, you know, and so there's that sense of trusting them to God, commending them to God's grace, that you pick up on, commending them to God's providence.

Yeah. Good. One more. Or if you thought somebody that shared theirs with you was particularly good, you can start nudging them.

Julie, naturally. All right. I didn't hear Dr. Gens's Okay. It goes, O God, strengthen us.

[44 : 10] Sorry, O God, who can strengthen us according to thy will, enable us to finish the task given to us by the law of Jesus, that we may keep watch over others and help a weak.

O God, O God, O God, O Lord, in thy name. Wonderful. Thank you. Thank you. All right. Can I suggest that what we do is move some kind of third person conversation descriptively here into kind of first person conversation conversation and then we just close our time by having a couple of you.

It could be the ones that you've already prayed. It could be some of you that haven't spoken yet. But just to speak out these prayers and then I'll close. But a couple of you could be some silence.

But if a couple of you would lead us in prayer and we'll close our time that way. Let's pray together. As Paul prayed in Romans, he begins his prayer at this book that he is a servant of Christ Jesus and that, O God, we acknowledge to you that you are the God of all creation and that we are a creation of yours and we ask that you would give us the strength to be servants of yours.

that our desire would be to give the life that you have given to us back to you and with it for your glory and to serve you in. Amen.

[46 : 11] Dear Lord, may we say that if you are interested, may we watch over ourselves and may we be after any situation and may we be such shepherds andashiach,imat ■■■■em together.

Amen, Amen. and gonna save you in your Lord you ■■■■ gives us bees , we entend evil actions and misdeeds where we reach high fall Tastemem your forgiveness and trust in you and your protection of ourselves and the defense of the church.

And so, Father of all grace, we are astonished by the way Paul loved the church, by the energy of service he had for the church.

And we know that we need that in our own lives. We know that we need that here at St. John's in these days in Vancouver. We pray that you would break our hearts for the church like you broke the heart of the Apostle Paul.

And we pray this so that this congregation, so that we as a people might come to maturity, might better follow the example of Christ our Savior, and might bear witness to the world, to the love of Christ.

[47 : 46] And it's through Christ we pray this. And the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Thank you all. Amen. Thanks for listening.

Thank you. Thank you.