

Advent II St. Bride December 10th 2017.

There is a very strong message in the Collect, Epistle and Gospel for this day. It is sound advice for all those of us who believe in the Second Coming of our Lord, and that this Second Coming might be arriving far sooner than we might have anticipated. The message deals with the problem, and offers the solution. But in truly biblical style, you have to work out the details!

The Problem is that the end times are coming...soon...and that the end times might result in things becoming very unpleasant for quite some time! The Solution: as the collect puts it: 'BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by 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 Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*'

But it is here that the solution becomes the problem: because we don't read the bible!

In 2005, on this Sunday, I wrote: 'It is really very simple. We are asking God that He might give us grace so that we might understand, that we might have the energy and the drive to read, Holy Scripture.

Why? Because we know that it is in a deeper understanding of the Word of God, that we might see our faith grow and develop into something far deeper than we might first imagine possible. Because everything that we need to know to understand our faith is contained in Holy Scripture. Because the stories really are wonderful, which is why we can keep on hearing them over and over, through all the ages. Because we love Jesus.'

One thing that I hold dear to my heart is the commitment your clergy have made that we shall read morning and evening prayer each day of our lives. This is a commitment of some 45 minutes, give or take, each day. (Morning Prayer is about half an hour, with Evening Prayer being, approximately, the 15 minutes.) But, that short time commitment means that each year, we shall have read the New testament twice, and the old Testament once, excepting some of the legalities and patrimonies! It also imbues in one the Book of Psalms, read through each calendar month, so that they become a welcome haven in which we can find the ancient wisdom of the prophets as written by the psalmist.

In the supplementation of this simple habit by deeper study, the small group pattern of bible study can achieve a greater understanding of the relevance of the bible story to the life which we live today. There is very little change in human nature: where there was a selfish behaviour then, it exists still now: where there was rude aggression then: there, it is still amongst us now.

However, one habit which was widespread for many years, seems to be in decline: and it is an essential and skillful habit for which we seek. How many of you read: read a lot, say one or two novels a week, as well as the newspapers – digital, perhaps - and magazines? Perhaps more importantly, has this habit increased, or decreased, over the past few years? Of course, part of any decrease can be put down to the effects of aging: poor vision, stiffness and joint pain, all mean that it is impossible to find that old 'comfortable' chair to curl up in – where you can have a 'good read'!

There are lots of methods encouraging the increase reading of the Bible: but the one in the front of the prayer book is the one I have always used: it is reproduced in the Ordo Kalendar, and also – my preference – on the ACC Kalendar. (Which we follow for the Saints' Days.) DRM+