



Monday, August 8, 2011

**READ-** The Psalter: Psalm 133

This psalm celebrates peace and unity, not just within biological families, but within the collective family of God. When Jews made their annual pilgrimage to Mt. Zion, this was one of the psalms sung as they made their way up the mountain. The anointing oil reflects joy and abundance. Mt. Hermon was known for its abundant dew providing water needed to sustain the land around it.

**REFLECT-**

- Families do not always live in peace. There is often discord and dysfunction and sometimes those whom we love the most are the ones we hurt. To whom in your family do you need to offer forgiveness and extend a hand of peace?

**PRAY-**

Lord, help me to put aside old family hurts, to forgive, and live peaceably with my family. Forgive me when I have caused them hurt. Amen.

Tuesday, August 9, 2011

**READ-** The Old Testament: Genesis 45:1-15

Jacob's favorite son has gone from a boy sold into slavery by his jealous brothers to overseer of the entire land of Egypt through God's guidance. He reveals his identity to his brothers and offers them forgiveness and reconciliation for the evil they did to him.

**REFLECT-**

- Joseph tells his brothers that what they intended as evil was turned around and used by God for his good purposes. How have you experienced that in your own life? In what ways has God used bad things that have happened to bring something good about?

**PRAY-**

O God, help me to be open to your guidance and to pay attention to all the many ways in which your will is done, despite the evil of human beings. Help me to be an instrument of peace and reconciliation in the world around me. Amen.

Wednesday, August 10, 2011

**READ-** The Epistle: Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

Paul again mourns the rejection of Christ as the Messiah by the Jews, for he himself is among that remnant of God's chosen people. But he asserts that God is merciful and will forgive their disobedience in accordance with his covenants of old.

**REFLECT-**

- The Jewish people are by no means the only ones who have rejected Christ as their Savior. Many in the community we live in do not know Christ or merely give him lip service as Lord. For those of us who call ourselves Christians, the way we live our lives is the best testimony for Christ to those who do not know him.

**PRAY-**

Father, I thank you that you are indeed merciful for we are a disobedient people. May my words and actions be a reflection of the love of Christ today. Amen.

Thursday, August 11, 2011

**READ-** The Gospel: Matthew 15:10-28

This story is often hard to understand because it seems that Jesus is rejecting the request of the Canaanite woman simply because she is a Gentile. His response seems harsh, comparing her to a dog. This seems very out of character for Jesus. Yet her simple faith changes the situation.

**REFLECT-**

- Are there people whom you reject or avoid simply because they are very different than you? Who are the people whom we have trouble reaching out to because of how they look or smell or act or speak? Jesus was compassionate and calls us to be as well.

**PRAY-**

O God, help me to reach out to those in need, even if they are very different from me. Amen.

Friday, August 12, 2011

**ACT-**

**Focus Verse:** Matthew 15:18

**What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles.**

The Jewish religious leaders were chastising Jesus for not insisting that his disciples keep their strict purity rituals. Jesus was quick to let them know that God is more interested in the purity of what is inside the heart and soul of a person than whether they have washed their hands. A dirty heart is of much greater concern than unwashed hands. As you go about your day, be conscious of your "unclean" thoughts – resentments, anger, jealousy, malice. Be intentional about keeping your thoughts and words "clean". Gossip is easily passed off as "expressing concern" about another person's problems. Be conscious of the true intent behind your words before you speak them to insure that they are for good purposes. Look for opportunities to praise, encourage, and build up other people today.