



Monday, December 5, 2011

READ- The Old Testament: *Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11*

After Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon, he freed the captive Israelites there to return to their homeland. Isaiah paints a glorious picture of what God has in store for those who have been oppressed and promises that they will receive justice.

REFLECT-

- Jesus quoted vs. 1-2 of this passage from Isaiah at the beginning of his public ministry, clearly spelling out his (and God's) priorities which all involved justice and mercy to the suffering and oppressed of the world. What is our congregation doing to share the gospel, bring about justice and offer compassion?

PRAY-

Lord, bring your Spirit upon me in a powerful way so that I may be a bearer of your good news and an instrument of justice and mercy. Amen.

Tuesday, December 6, 2011

READ- The Psalter: *Psalms 126*

The psalmist encourages God's people to remember God's mighty acts of justice and deliverance in the past so that they might have hope in the current time of trial. Then he makes a confident appeal for God's mercy and justice once again.

REFLECT-

- Likewise, it is important for us to reflect often on all the ways which God has blessed us and lifted us up in time of need. Our awareness of God's work in our lives allows us to be confident even in the worst of times that God loves us and will never leave us. Spend some time today reflecting on God's gracious activity in your life thus far this week.

PRAY-

Lord, thank you for all the ways you work in my life and within the world. Help me to be watchful for your hand at work so that I may be directed and strengthened in my faith. Amen.

Wednesday, December 7, 2011

READ- The Epistle: *1 Thessalonians 5:16-24*

The Apostle Paul, who often wrote in meandering, complicated prose, cuts straight to the heart of the Christian life in vs. 16-22. He sets forth simple, direct standards of living and conduct for the church at Thessalonica which was enduring great persecution.

REFLECT-

- Evaluate your own life and conduct using Paul's benchmarks. They are not easy standards. It's difficult to rejoice always when life is painful or unfair. Praying without ceasing takes discipline and focus. Sometimes we just don't feel very thankful. Yet Paul says that these things are God's will for us. Choose one of these benchmarks and let it shape and inform how you live today.

PRAY-

Father, help me to be intentional today about my words and actions, keeping in mind the example of Christ. Amen.

Thursday, December 8, 2011

READ- The Gospel: *John 1:6-8, 19-28*

John the Baptist had to have been a powerful preacher. Why else would throngs of people leave Jerusalem and journey out in the desert to hear him and submit to his baptism? In this passage, the religious authorities make that journey into the desert to find out for themselves just who this man was and why people listened to him.

REFLECT-

- John's message was simple: Christ is coming and we need to prepare ourselves by turning our lives around – repenting. Advent is that opportunity for preparation for Christ's coming. What in your daily life needs turning around to be more obedient to Christ's commands?

PRAY-

O God, I look forward to your coming. Help me to see the things that need to be changed or released in my life so that I may be obedient to your will. Amen.

Friday, December 9, 2011

READ- Sermon Text: *Luke 3:7-18*

John tells the crowds who came to him in the desert that true repentance was more than just words – it must be followed up with acts of justice and mercy – feeding and clothing the poor and being fair in business dealings.

REFLECT-

- As we prepare to receive Christ, our actions speak clearly of our repentance. Is our focus on ourselves or on the needs of others? What are we doing to offer compassion and care?

PRAY-

O God, please make me mindful today of ways in which I may "live into" true repentance and to act with justice and mercy. Amen.