



Monday, January 17, 2011

**READ-** The Psalter: Psalm 27:1, 4-9

The first verses of this Psalm are some of the most beautiful and best-known words of comfort and confidence in God's power and presence in the Psalms. The psalmist's keen awareness of God's action in his life is reflected in verses 4-5 lead to words of praise and an entreaty to God to stay by his side always.

**REFLECT-**

- Read the psalm aloud, taking time to really think about the emotions expressed within the beautiful words. How has the Lord been "the stronghold" of your life (vs. 1)? How has God hidden you in his shelter and lifted up your head (vs. 5-6)?

**PRAY-**

Lord, you ARE my light and my salvation. You ARE the stronghold of my life. Thank you for always being there with me. Amen.

Tuesday, January 18, 2011

**READ-** Old Testament: Isaiah 9:1-4

This passage is a portion of a poem of rejoicing written as a new king takes the throne in Israel after defeating enemies. There is hope instead of despair. Verse 2 is read each year during the Advent season and interpreted to predict the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

**REFLECT-**

- People through the centuries have identified with the phrase "the people who walked in darkness". There is so much evil and suffering in the world that we long for a light of joy and redemption to shine. We long for the Kingdom of God to come as Jesus promised so there will be "no gloom for those who are in anguish".

**PRAY-**

Lord, help me to stay focused on that "great light" – Jesus Christ – in the way I live my life each day so that I may do my part to bring love and compassion into a hurting world. Amen.

Wednesday, January 19, 2011

**READ-** The Epistle: I Corinthians 1:10-18

Even in the early church, Christian followers had difficulties getting along with one another. Here Paul is trying to mediate these difficulties from afar, encouraging the people to focus only on Christ and to put aside anything else that might cause divisions between them.

**REFLECT-**

- Unfortunately, the same kinds of problems exist in our congregations today. We get caught up in petty disagreements, putting our own selfish desires, power struggles and misplaced priorities ahead of Christ's priorities for us as God's people. Is there something now that you need to let go of, ask forgiveness for, or mend a fence about with a fellow believer?

**PRAY-**

Father, forgive me for the times when I put my own desires before your priorities in the way I relate to Christian brothers and sisters. Amen.

Thursday, January 20, 2011

**READ-** The Gospel: Matthew 4:12-23

This is a crucial turning point in Jesus' ministry. John the Baptist has been arrested and is shortly put to death. Jesus left the area where they had been working closely together and withdrew to Galilee, preparing to call his disciples and begin his public ministry in earnest. Peter and Andrew, James and John – all fishermen – left everything to follow him.

**REFLECT-**

- There is no logical explanation why four men who made a good living fishing would drop everything to go with a rabbi they hardly knew. It was likely something they could not explain. It was God working in a miraculous way. Where has God led you that you did not anticipate?

**PRAY-**

O God, give me the courage to respond when you call me, even if involves sacrifice and fear of the unknown. Help me to trust you as those disciples trusted Jesus. Amen.

Friday, January 21, 2011

**ACT-**

Focus Verse: Matthew 4:19

..."Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."

If you've ever been fishing, you know it requires good preparation, patience, persistence and a good sense for where to cast your line or drop your net. Sometimes hours of effort produces no catch. Sometimes you are in just the right spot at just the right time and the catch is abundant. As Christians, we are called to "fish for people". We prepare ourselves with prayer, study and worship; we patiently wait for the right opportunity to share our faith with someone. We must not become discouraged if it seems our efforts don't have immediate results. Today may be the day for you to "cast your line" or "drop your net" drawing someone into God's love.