



Monday, January 31, 2011

READ- The Psalter: Psalm 112:1-10

This psalm maintains that those who live according to God's commandments with compassion, justice, and generosity toward others will be blessed by God. The other important point is that those who live with righteousness will be an example for others to see that will reflect God's love for humanity.

REFLECT-

- Are you a "light in the darkness" (verse 4) for others that reflect the nature of God's love? Do your words and actions exemplify God's priorities expressed in this psalm – to be "gracious, merciful, and righteous" (verse 4)?

PRAY-

Lord, help me today to live in a way that is pleasing to you and that makes your love known to all those I encounter. Amen.

Tuesday, February 1, 2011

READ- Old Testament: Isaiah 58:9-12

The prophet chastises the people for their empty religious rituals done only to make themselves look good or to try to selfishly secure some blessing from God. He says that God despises those things. The true worship of God, Isaiah says, is through helping those in need, those who suffer or have been treated unjustly.

REFLECT-

- Are there religious rituals we practice that are empty or just for appearances? Do we pray to God only to satisfy our needs and wants or do we lift up the needs of others first? How does your life reflect the true worship of God described by Isaiah?

PRAY-

Gracious God, help be aware today of opportunities to serve those in need, someone who is sick or grieving, or to right an injustice. Give me guidance and courage to act in ways that are pleasing to you. Amen.

Wednesday, February 2, 2011

READ- The Epistle: I Corinthians 2:1-16

The culture surrounding the church in Corinth was a cosmopolitan one in which reason and knowledge were highly prized. Paul tries to help those Christian believers understand that the "wisdom" desired by that culture is very different than the wisdom of Christ's death and resurrection which, paradoxically, are the things that bring redemption and new life.

REFLECT-

- It is hard for any of us to understand how good can come out of suffering. Yet God chose to bring the ultimate good – the salvation of all humankind – through the horrific suffering of his Son on the cross. The "wisdom" in that is difficult for us to grasp as human beings. Where in your life have you seen good come from suffering?

PRAY-

Father, I thank you that you loved us enough to send your Son to teach us, love us, and give his life for us that we might be saved from our sins. Amen.

Thursday, February 3, 2011

READ- The Gospel: Matthew 5:13-20

Jesus gives his disciples simple images – salt and light – to represent the way they are to live obediently. Salt enhances the flavor of whatever it touches; the compassion, healing and love of a true Christian disciple enhance the lives of those around them. A light illumines the darkness; the words and actions of the Christian disciple bring hope and faith to those who hear and experience the good news of Christ.

REFLECT-

- In what ways are you "salt" and "light" to others in your daily life? Do your words and actions improve the lives of those around you? Do people who do not know the good news of Christ hear it and experience it from you?

PRAY-

O God, help me to be "salt" and "light" today. Amen.

Friday, February 4, 2011

ACT-

Focus Verse: Isaiah 58:9b-10

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness.

It is not enough to be just to be generous with our resources. The spirit with which we do so is also important. The words we speak and our thoughts have the potential to poison our generosity. If we give, but are critical, cynical or judgmental of those we serve, Isaiah says that God is not glorified. God is the judge. We are to be instruments of God's compassion and generous love with a joyful spirit. Try to live that out today.