



Monday, July 11, 2011

**READ-** The Psalter: Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24

God knows us down to the most intimate details of our life. There is nowhere we can go, nothing we can do or think or say that God does not know. The psalmist celebrates God's faithful presence with us, pursuing us, leading us, walking beside us.

**REFLECT-**

- Although there may be times in our lives when we feel God has abandoned us, this psalm can be our assurance and affirmation that is never the case. Awareness of God's presence requires us paying attention. In what ways have you felt God's presence and activity in your life over the last 24 hours?

**PRAY-**

Lord, I thank you for your gracious and ever-faithful presence in my life. Amen.

Tuesday, July 12, 2011

**READ-** The Old Testament: Genesis 28:10-19a

Jacob is running away after tricking his father into giving him his brother's Esau's blessing as the elder child. His mother Rebekah, fearing for Jacob's safety, sends him away to relatives in the old country. Alone in the desert, Jacob has an encounter with God and receives God's promise of many good things. Jacob is not deserving – God is gracious.

**REFLECT-**

- Jacob is so awed by his experience that he erects a stone monument marking the place where he encountered God. Is there a "holy place" that you have marked in your memory? A mountaintop, a quiet place beside a stream, a seaside beach? Perhaps your grandmother's kitchen table? How did you experience God's presence in that place?

**PRAY-**

O God, keep me watchful for those holy moments in my life when you draw very near in a powerful way and use them to mold my faith. Amen.

Wednesday, July 13, 2011

**READ-** The Epistle: Romans 8:12-25

Paul acknowledges to the Roman church the brokenness of human beings, their culture and society, and even the natural world. But despite our sin that has created this brokenness, we are God's beloved children and have the promise of a new creation through Christ.

**REFLECT-**

- It was tough for those Roman Christians to keep the faith in their circumstances. It is tough for us today at Christians to live in ways that are counter to our culture. We must have hope. Paul reminds us here of a hope that is eternal. In what area of your life do you need that hope today?

**PRAY-**

Father, it is hard for us to be patient. When there is so much suffering and evil in the world, sometimes we get discouraged. Renew our hope. Amen.

Thursday, July 14, 2011

**READ-** The Gospel: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Jesus uses an example all his listeners would have understood here to teach them about judgment. Those who are good and faithful exist side-by-side with those who reject God. Yet it is God who does the final sorting out of the "wheat" from the "weeds", not human beings.

**REFLECT-**

- Although the teaching is simple and straightforward, it is so hard to live out. People hurt us, disappoint us, frighten and disgust us at times. We want fairness and accountability. Yet Jesus says firmly, "That's not your job." The next logical step is forgiveness.

**PRAY-**

O God, forgive my tendency to judge other people, keeping me ever mindful that they too are your beloved children. Amen.

Friday, July 15, 2011

**READ-** Sermon Text: John 1:43-50

Jesus is beginning his public ministry and is gathering his disciples. Phillip invites Nathaniel to "come and see". Nathaniel doubts that anyone great could come from a backwater town like Nazareth. Yet when he meets Jesus, he is overwhelmed and immediately professes his faith.

**REFLECT-**

- Jesus tells Nathaniel to expect great things to come, to expect God to show up in a dramatic and mighty way, just as God did for Jacob in his experience in the desert. Do you really expect God to show up in a mighty way in your life? Jesus gives us that promise as well.

**PRAY-**

O God, thank you for your promises, your presence, and the miraculous ways in which you work in my life and the world around me. Help me to open my mind and my heart to see that "ladder of angels" when it drops down into my life. Amen.