



Monday, July 4, 2011

**READ-** The Psalter: Psalm 119:105-112

This passage of the longest psalm in the Bible affirms the importance of holy scripture to guide our lives and the importance of praising God, even in times of trouble and suffering. God's promises are steadfast despite evil in this world and we must hold fast to them.

**REFLECT-**

- The Bible contains important guidance for our life, but we must be familiar enough with it to know where to look. The psalmist relied upon the guidance of the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament). What scriptures have been a "lamp to your feet and a light to your path"? Do you know where to find them if you need them?

**PRAY-**

Lord, I thank you for the words of your holy scripture which help us to know you and to feel your love for us. Amen.

Tuesday, July 5, 2011

**READ-** The Old Testament: Genesis 25:19-34

The Bible is full of stories in which God works through unlikely people and their dysfunctional families. Isaac and Rebekah played favorites with their twin sons. Esau was short-sighted and wanted immediate gratification; Jacob was an opportunist.

**REFLECT-**

- Jacob took advantage of his brother in a weak moment, yet God used Jacob's sinful behavior to uphold the covenant he made with Abraham. God had chosen Jacob for a special role in his ongoing relationship with his chosen people. Even when we are not perfect, God can still use us to do his will, as evidenced here.

**PRAY-**

O God, forgive me when my words and actions are wrong or mistaken. Use me – weak and sinful though I may be – so that your will may be done. Amen.

Wednesday, July 6, 2011

**READ-** The Epistle: Romans 8:1-11

Paul asks the Roman church, "To whom is your allegiance? To Christ or to the things of this world?" He cautions they must choose carefully because salvation and new life come only through acceptance of Christ and the gift of the Spirit. And furthermore, if they choose Christ and receive the Spirit, the way they live must change to reflect Christ's commandments to us.

**REFLECT-**

- It is easy to say that we are a Christian. It is not nearly so easy to live after the example of Christ. Truly accepting Christ means our life changes; we open ourselves to the guidance of the Spirit; and we learn and try to live out Christ's teachings. To whom is your allegiance? To Christ or to the things of this world?

**PRAY-**

Father, I want to be a Christ follower. Give me the strength, discernment, and faithfulness to pattern my life after his example. Amen.

Thursday, July 7, 2011

**READ-** The Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Jesus didn't typically interpret the parables he told, but in this case he does. Jesus is the sower, the gospel is the seed, hearers of the gospel are various kinds of soil, and belief and faithfulness is the desired harvest. These were comparisons that all his listeners would have easily understood.

**REFLECT-**

- What kind of "soil" exists in your landscape of your life for faithfulness and obedience to God in which to take root? Do you enrich that soil with regular worship, prayer, and bible study? What are the "thorns" – distractions that may skew your priorities or distract your focus from God?

**PRAY-**

O God, help me to be intentional about enriching the "soil" of my life so that I may be fertile ground for your love to grow in and through me into the world. Amen.

Friday, July 8, 2011

**ACT-**

Focus Verse: Matthew 13:8

Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

God plants seeds of righteousness, joy, faithfulness and love in the soil of our lives every day. What fruit will you bear today as you go about your daily work and activities? How will your words and actions reflect Jesus' commands to love God and your neighbor? Be watchful and alert for opportunities today to bring those seeds to harvest in some way. A loving word, an act of kindness or generosity, a prayer that is offered and answered, a burden that is shared and lightened in some way. God has planted in your life. Be fruitful today in some way.