



Monday, November 7, 2011

**READ-** The Old Testament: Judges 4:1-7

Over and over, the Israelites “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” and because of their disobedience, they were conquered by pagan neighbors. Yet because of their repentance and plea to God for help, a prophetess named Deborah assures their leaders that they can prevail against their oppressors.

**REFLECT-**

- Women were seen as property in that culture and were generally given no authority. However, something was different about Deborah. When she spoke, the leaders of the people listened and followed her direction. Sometimes the guidance we need from God comes through unexpected people. How has that happened in your life? Were you resistant at first to that direction?

**PRAY-**

Lord, you work in remarkable ways through all sorts of people and circumstances. Keep me open to receive your direction today. Amen.

Tuesday, November 8, 2011

**READ-** The Psalter: Psalm 123

This psalm expresses the plea of a suffering people that God grant them mercy and show kindness to them. This psalm still resonates deeply with people who are oppressed, live in violence, have no freedoms, and live with hunger and extreme need.

**REFLECT-**

- For those of us who live “at ease” and have freedom, safety and plenty, we don’t really understand the depth of the psalmist’s cry to God for mercy, relief, and justice. You mediate God’s mercy and justice to your needy, hurting neighbors each time you offer a simple act of kindness, compassion or help.

**PRAY-**

O God, keep me aware today of chances to show mercy and kindness to someone who is suffering or in need. Amen.

Wednesday, November 9, 2011

**READ-** The Epistle: I Thessalonians 5:1-11

Paul once more offers encouragement to the Thessalonians not to give in to the pressures and temptations of their pagan culture, reminding them of their salvation in Jesus Christ if they live in obedience to Christ’s teachings. They must hold fast to their faith and encourage one another.

**REFLECT-**

- Being part of a body of Christian believers is essential for us to maintain our faith in a pagan culture not so different from that in Paul’s day. We need Christian friends to share our griefs, joys and struggles and to offer us encouragement. Who needs your words of encouragement today?

**PRAY-**

Father, I thank you for my church family and for their love and encouragement in my life. Help me to be an encourager today. Amen.

Thursday, November 10, 2011

**READ-** The Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus shares a parables with the disciples to give them a sense of how they must operate in the world during the time between his ascension to the Father and his return in final judgment. Everything that God gives us – our abilities, our material resources, our time – is intended for us to multiply God’s kingdom and do Jesus’ work in the world.

**REFLECT-**

- What are you doing in the way you live your life to effectively use what God has given you – abilities, resources, and time – to expand God’s kingdom and care for your neighbors? To which slave in the parable might you compare yourself?

**PRAY-**

O God, help me to make your priorities my priorities. Help me to live into Jesus’ commands to love one another with my time and resources. Amen.

Friday, November 11, 2011

**ACT-**

**Focus Verse:** I Thessalonians 5:11

**Therefore encourage one another and build up each other.**

Select at least five people from people whom you know of who may need encouragement in some way today and over the weekend. Perhaps they are grieving the loss of a loved one or a divorce, recovering from an illness or injury, experiencing depression or anxiety, dealing with loneliness, caring for a sick or elderly person, worrying about a friend, child or relative who is in jail, or struggling with addiction of some kind. Reach out to those five (or more) people today through a beautiful or funny card, a phone call, a visit, flowers, a meal or some other demonstration of your love and concern for them. Pray for them, pray WITH them if the opportunity arises. Your prayers and simple acts of kindness and care allow you to be the hands and feet of Jesus to someone who needs his comfort, peace and encouragement today.