



Monday, August 27, 2012

**READ-** The Psalter: Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9

This is the only psalm in the bible which addresses a human being rather than God. It was probably written for a king in Israel or Judah on the occasion of their marriage. The psalmist praises the king's merits and celebrates his righteousness before God.

**REFLECT-**

- The psalmist's assertions that physical beauty, material wealth, and power over other people were a sign of God's favor do not correspond with the teachings of Jesus and with the life experiences most of us have had. God's love is with us regardless of our appearance, circumstances or means.

**PRAY-**

O God, you look deep within my heart and I thank you that you love me and care for me in all the seasons and circumstances of my life. Amen.

Tuesday, August 28, 2012

**READ-** The Epistle: James 1:17-27

Gratitude for God's many gifts is to be reflected in the way we live our lives. The way we respond to our circumstances and to the words and actions of others shows whether there is love in our hearts. Helping those who are hurting or in need makes us not just hearers of the word, but doers also.

**REFLECT-**

- Our Christian faith is shared with others, not only through our words but by how we treat other people, whether we show care and compassion for others, and whether we share what we have with those in need. Being a Christian is a 24/7 calling – not just warming a pew for an hour on Sunday mornings!

**PRAY-**

Father, give me the fruits of your Spirit so that my words may be kind and my actions may reflect my love for You. Amen.

Wednesday, August 29, 2012

**READ-** The Old Testament: Song of Solomon 2:8-13

This literature is dramatically different than any other book in the bible. This section is written by a dark-skinned woman who openly celebrates a forbidden relationship with her shepherd lover. It celebrates the joy of human love and the beauty of the natural world.

**REFLECT-**

- Finding this type of love poetry within the canon of our holy scriptures emphasizes the importance of human relationships and that God has created us to love deeply and joyfully and to drink in the beauty of his good creation. Give thanks today for those whom you love and for the natural beauty you see around you.

**PRAY-**

Lord, I give you thanks for those whom you have put in my life to love. Help me never to take them for granted because they are gifts from You. Amen.

Thursday, August 30, 2012

**READ-** The Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

The Jewish Pharisees and Scribes openly challenge Jesus because his disciples are seen eating without first washing their hands, which violated Jewish purity laws. Jesus responds that God is interested in our inner purity, not whether our hands are clean or not.

**REFLECT-**

- This passage might prompt us to examine things that we may do "for show" so that others might think we are good Christians. Do we look pious and prayerful at Sunday worship and then act and speak in ways that are contrary the rest of the time?

**PRAY-**

O God, you look into our hearts – we cannot hide from you. Cleanse me from the inside out so that my life is pleasing to you. Amen.

Friday, August 31, 2012

**ACT-**

**Focus Verse:** James 1:27

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

This verse from James corresponds directly to Jesus' teaching in the gospel passage. God created us to love and care for one another, sharing others' joys and bearing others' burdens. Widows and orphans were at the mercy of others' compassion in that society, at the very bottom of the economic and social structure. Look for ways in which you can make serving and caring for those who are hurting or in need a regular part of your life. We are called to give of our time and our material resources to help others. What can you do today to provide care, comfort, encouragement or assistance to someone who needs it?