



Monday, December 10, 2012

**READ-** The Old Testament: Zephaniah 3:14-20

Zephaniah was a prophet during the reign of King Josiah, who tried to bring the nation of Judah back in line with God's laws and did much to restore justice. Zephaniah proclaimed that good things were coming for those who remained faithful to God.

**REFLECT-**

- We read this passage during Advent because it is a beautiful description of the kingdom of God that Jesus came to inaugurate as Messiah. It speaks of justice and mercy and the power of God to save those whom he loves. All accomplished through the life, death and resurrection of that tiny child born in Bethlehem.

**PRAY-**

Lord, you are a God of power, mercy and forgiveness. We give you thanks for your great love for your people and for all creation. Amen.

Tuesday, December 11, 2012

**READ-** The Epistle: Philippians 4:4-7

Paul encourages the Philippians to "rejoice in the Lord" and reminds them that "the Lord is near". During Advent, we are called to joy because of the nearness of Christ. We are reminded that God is with us always, but came much nearer in human form through Jesus.

**REFLECT-**

- God came in flesh so that we might truly know God's nature of love, mercy and redemption. Because of his life, death and resurrection, we need not "worry about anything" (vs. 6) – God's peace is freely available to us through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. We need only ask and it is ours.

**PRAY-**

O God, I give you thanks and praise that I am already forgiven and redeemed as your beloved child through the saving work of Christ. Amen.

Wednesday, December 12, 2012

**READ-** The Old Testament Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-6

The prophet Isaiah consistently spoke of a great king descended from King David who would bring salvation to God's people. In this passage, he speaks of the joy that comes through trusting God to provide and give thanks for God's work among his people.

**REFLECT-**

- Opening our hearts with gratitude to God for all our blessings of life and celebrating all the ways God has worked in our lives and those we love to accomplish his will is the key to preparing for Christmas. Joy comes not only from what we receive, but from what we give in gratitude to God.

**PRAY-**

Thank you, Lord, for all the ways in which you have blessed me. I pray that I may in turn be a blessing to others. Amen.

Thursday, December 13, 2012

**READ-** The Gospel: Luke 3:7-18

John the Baptist challenged the religious leaders who believed their keeping of the law would provide salvation for them as descendants of Abraham. His advice to the crowds who followed him emphasized acts of mercy and justice and sharing what we have as keys to true salvation.

**REFLECT-**

- John redefined what the priorities of Jewish community needed to be if God was to be pleased – not legalistic, pious religious ceremonies which excluded many people; rather acts of justice and mercy which showed God's love for those hurting and in need.

**PRAY-**

O God, reorder my priorities so that loving you and loving my neighbor take precedence with my time, my talents and my resources. Amen.

Friday, December 20, 2012

**ACT-**

**Focus Verse:** Philippians 4:4-7

**Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.**

Gentleness, one of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:23, is a way of living which can be cultivated. It is a calmness of spirit born of an assurance of God's love and presence in all circumstances. With its partner humility, gentleness can govern our words (slow to speak, listening carefully), our decisions (discerning God's will), and our actions (peaceable, compassionate). Gentleness allows anger to pass quickly, forgiveness to be offered freely, and loving relationships to grow. As you go about your day, "let your gentleness be known to everyone". Be intentional in fostering that fruit of the Spirit, remembering that the Lord **is** near. Let him walk with you throughout your day, allowing his gentleness to be your guide.