



Monday, December 17, 2012

**READ-** The Old Testament: Micah 5:2-5a

This passage from the prophet Micah has long been interpreted by Christians as a prediction of Christ's birth since he was born in the tiny city of Bethlehem and he often used illustrations of sheep and shepherd to describe his relationship with his people.

**REFLECT-**

- This passage describes the ministry of Jesus in a beautiful way. Who would have believed that the Messiah would come from the tiny hill country town of Bethlehem? And who would compare a mighty king to a lowly shepherd? Yet all his words rang true.

**PRAY-**

Lord, thank you for sending your Son to love us and to show us how to live together in peace. Amen.

Tuesday, December 18, 2012

**READ-** The Epistle: Hebrews 10:5-10

This passage affirms that, with Christ's perfect sacrifice for us on the cross, the animal sacrifices prescribed for forgiveness under the old law were no longer needed. Not only that, but a priest is not needed as our intermediary to God – Jesus taught us that we can pray to God directly.

**REFLECT-**

- Imagine if you had spent your whole life thinking that animal sacrifices that were offered took away your sins – then suddenly you were told that was no longer the case. And suddenly you are allowed to offer your prayers yourself. What a drastic and wonderful change!

**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 19, 2012

**READ-** The Gospel: Luke 1:39-45

After Mary's visit with the angel, she goes to see her cousin Elizabeth who is pregnant with John the Baptist. Once again, Mary is provided with assurance that the child she is carrying is indeed the long-awaited Messiah through the words of Elizabeth.

**REFLECT-**

- These women had much in common. Something miraculous and unexpected had happened to both of them. The babies they were carrying were part of God's plan of redemption for the world, yet both would suffer and be killed by those they came to redeem. Both women were obedient to God's will and rejoiced at God's blessing in their lives. In what way do you need to submit your life to God's will today?

**PRAY-**

Lord, help me to know your will and give me courage to do it. Amen.

Thursday, December 20, 2012

**READ-** The New Testament Psalm: Luke 1:46b-55

Constructed in the same format as many of the psalms of praise in the Hebrew bible, Mary's song of praise to God extols God's mercy and special concern for the poor, a condition she knew firsthand. Her words foreshadowed her son's concern and compassion for the poor, those who are oppressed and who suffer.

**REFLECT-**

- Mary rejoiced and praised God for something remarkable that was happening in her life. What is happening your life today in which you can see God's hand at work? Have you offered God praise and thanksgiving for those things? Do it now.

**PRAY-**

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Amen.

Friday, December 21, 2012

**ACT-**

**Focus Verse:** Luke 1:53

**He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.**

During the holiday season, we are often much more aware of those around us who are in need AND of the excesses encouraged by our materialistic culture. Lavish holiday parties and expensive gifts do not honor the Christ child in terms of God's priorities. The scripture is clear – both Old Testament and Jesus' teachings – we are to worship God and to help those who are in need in whatever way that we can. Celebrating with our families is important. But first, we must do what we can for those who are hungry, cold, lonely, and suffering, just as Jesus did when we walked among us.