



Monday, December 3, 2012

READ- The Old Testament: Malachi 3:1-4

The prophet's name Malachi means "my messenger" and he foretold of the coming of a Messiah who would fulfill God's covenant with his people. He lived during the time after the return from Babylonian exile and the rebuilding of the temple, but he was concerned about the ways the people were worshiping God and sought righteousness for the people.

REFLECT-

- Jesus' followers interpreted his coming as the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy and were hopeful that he would be a mighty ruler such as David whose military strength would overthrow the Roman government. Yet Jesus' power was of a different realm entirely and God kept his covenant through Jesus' sacrifice.

PRAY-

Lord, thank you for your great faithfulness. You continue to keep your covenant to love us in spite of our shortcomings and sin. Amen.

Tuesday, December 4, 2012

READ- The Epistle: Philippians 1:3-11

Paul, who is writing from prison, offers thanksgiving and encouragement to the church at Philippi, which was close to his heart. He commends the congregation for faithfulness and he prays that they will receive discernment from God so that they may produce a "harvest of righteousness".

REFLECT-

- How important are the relationships you have with other Christian friends in terms of your spiritual growth? Is there someone you can invite or encourage to get involved in ministry?

PRAY-

O God, help me to reach out today to someone who needs a church family and encourage them to be part of this congregation. Amen.

Wednesday, December 5, 2012

READ- The New Testament Psalm: Luke 1:68-79

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, praises God for all his good works and for the promised messiah who will save his people. He addresses the latter part of the psalm to his son who he says will prepare the way for that Messiah.

REFLECT-

- This passage, which is structured like a classic psalm, reminds us of the centuries of prophetic messages foretelling the one who will come to save God's people that came to pass in the birth of Jesus Christ. Prepare your heart once more for the coming of Christ!

PRAY-

Thank you, Lord, for your holy scripture which helps us to understand your plan for the salvation of the world through your Son. Amen.

Thursday, December 6, 2012

READ- The Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

The son of Zechariah grows up to be the messenger sent to foretell Christ's coming and to encourage the people to repent of their sins and make ready for the Messiah. He uses the words of Isaiah 40:3-5 which predict that not just the Jews, but "all flesh shall see the salvation of God".

REFLECT-

- John's primary emphasis was on repentance of sins so that God's forgiveness might come. He did not know who that Messiah might be or in what ways he would bring that forgiveness, but he knew the people needed to prepare their hearts – as do we. Advent is that time of preparation so that we may receive Jesus once more.

PRAY-

O God, in the words of the prophet Micah, help me to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly" with you and with my neighbor. Amen.

Friday, December 7, 2012

ACT-

Focus Verse: Philippians 1:9 - 11

This is my prayer that your love may overflow more and more... [to] produce a harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Each of us is blessed with an outpouring of God's love so that we in turn may be fruitful in the world around us, sharing that love through acts of mercy and compassion with those we encounter. Producing a "harvest of righteousness" means doing what is right in God's eyes. Paul encourages us to seek discernment from God so that our words, our actions, our choices and our service to him may be in line with His will. As you go about your day, be intentional about choosing God's way – kind words, patience, perseverance, generosity, humble behavior turning aside anger. Those are the fruits of the spirit reaped in the harvest of God's righteousness. Be alert for all the ways the Holy Spirit moves through those fruits.