



Monday, April 22, 2013

**READ-** The Psalter: Psalm 148

This psalm was meant to be read aloud with great energy and joy. It calls on all God's remarkable creation to praise him for his mighty and gracious works. As you read aloud, close your eyes and visualize all the elements of creation that are described in the passage.

**REFLECT-**

- We need to be reminded often that God to whom we pray, to whom we express our deepest and smallest needs, is the same God who created all the things described in this psalm. How remarkable that the divine Creator cares for each of us!

**PRAY-**

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Amen.

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

**READ-** Acts of the Apostles: Acts 11:1-18

Peter receives insight in this vision of the sheet descending filled with animals considered unclean based on Jewish Levitical law. After the voice tells him three times that God, not people, determine what is acceptable, Peter finally understands that God's redemption is available to all people, not just the people of Israel.

**REFLECT-**

- The earliest Christians still believed that the salvation Jesus offered was only for the "chosen people". Peter learned otherwise in this passage. Who are the people whom we exclude from our Christian community because we consider them in some way "unclean" or unacceptable? What might God be calling us to do through this passage in terms of reaching out to those people?

**PRAY-**

Lord, help me to remember that each person I meet is your beloved child. Help me to put aside my fears, biases, and judgment and to do my best to love them as you do. Amen.

Wednesday, April 24, 2013

**READ-** The Epistle: Revelation 21:1-6

This passage is part of our United Methodist liturgy for services of death and resurrection because it speaks beautifully of the hope we have for eternal life in the future. John foresaw in this vision the time in which all suffering and death are no more and all God's people and creation live together in perfect peace.

**REFLECT-**

- What feelings does this passage evoke in you when you read it? Do you feel fearful or comforted? What do you imagine it will be like when "God dwells with his people"? Are you able to embrace this vision with confidence that you will be present on that day?

**PRAY-**

Father, we are often afraid of the unknown. Help me to be confident in your love and forgiveness and live each day as if it were my last so that when that new heaven and earth come, I will be there. Amen.

Thursday, April 25, 2013

**READ-** The Gospel: John 13:31-35

As Jesus prepares to leave his disciples to carry on his work, he tells them their first priority must be to "love one another". His life and ministry had set that example for them, but they needed to hear it from him as a "commandment".

**REFLECT-**

- It sounds so simple and easy, yet we know from our life experience how hard it can be to "love one another". Even those who should be closest to us – our family – are often difficult to love. If we struggle to love them, how can we possibly love those who are very different from us, those who hate us or intend harm to us?

**PRAY-**

O God, help me to make your priorities my priorities. Help me to make an effort every day to live into Jesus' command to love one another. Amen.

Friday, April 26, 2013

**ACT-**

Focus Verse: Acts 11:17

If God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was | that | could hinder God?

As you go about your day, think of each person whom you encounter as God's beloved child – the person who rings up your groceries at the store, the man holding the sign that says "Homeless and hungry" at the intersection, the gay couple holding hands as they walk down the street. If Peter was correct in interpreting his vision, then God includes in his kingdom even those who we may think aren't acceptable. Peter couldn't imagine keeping close company with Gentiles, but God made him think differently. Make an effort today to reach out in Christian love to someone who is difficult for you to love or accept. Who are we to "hinder God"?