



Monday, December 9, 2013

READ- New Testament Psalm: Luke 1:47-55

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.

Tuesday, December 10, 2013

READ- Old Testament: Isaiah 35:1-10

Writing for the Jewish people exiled in Babylonian captivity, the prophet paints a picture of a new day when all will be restored and God will once again make a "highway" for his people to return home. Nature will respond with lushness and plenty and God's people will be strengthened once more to overcome their enemies.

REFLECT-

- Think of a time in your life when you need God's restoration. Remember a time when you felt at your lowest and God lifted you from that place of despair. Passages such as this one are important for us to read when we are at those low points in life because they exemplify hope and God's promise of redemption.

PRAY-

Lord, thank you for those times when you have brought me back from a place of suffering, pain or despair. You truly are a God of hope and redemption. Thank you for never giving up on me. Amen.

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

READ- The Epistle: James 5:7-10

Patience is something in which our culture has little interest. We want everything NOW, as evidenced by our electronic communications and credit card spending. The congregation to whom James was writing wanted Christ to return NOW and end their suffering and persecution.

REFLECT-

- Learning to wait patiently for God to work in our lives is something that is tough for each of us. We want answers to our questions, solutions to our problems, and relief from our suffering. Yet God's ways are not ours and those things come in God's time.

PRAY-

Father, I lift to you my needs, my hurts, and my questions today. Help me to wait patiently for your will to be done in my life. Amen.

Thursday, December 12, 2013

READ- The Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

John the Baptist sends word to Jesus through his disciples asking if he is indeed the Messiah. Like many people, the Messiah John expected did not line up with the actions and words of Jesus. John foretold a Messiah of judgment and punishment; Jesus was a Messiah of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation.

REFLECT-

- Some Christians are very focused on God's judgment and the possibility of hellfire and damnation. Yet the life of Jesus Christ showed us mercy, forgiveness, compassion, healing and restoration as God's nature and focus. Jesus told John to look at his actions and to decide for himself. Good advice for us as well.

PRAY-

O God, thank you for sending your Son so that we may truly know your love for us and receive your great mercy and redemption. Amen.

Friday, December 13, 2013

ACT-

Focus Verse: Isaiah 35:4a

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God."

All of us know what it is like to have a "fearful heart". Life deals us crushing blows sometimes – people we love die or leave us, sickness and suffering take away our joy. We are so often filled with worry, regret, and sadness. You will likely encounter someone today who has a "fearful heart" because of what is happening in their life. Take the opportunity to be an encourager, reminding them that God is always with them to give them comfort, strength and the ability to deal with whatever may come. Share one of your own experiences of God carrying you through a time when your heart was fearful. Your witness of faith can lift up someone who is struggling and give them hope!