



Monday, January 6, 2014

**READ-** *The Psalter: Psalm 29*

This is one of the oldest psalms in the canon, probably dating back to a time in which Israel believed there were many gods, but YHWH was the supreme being. The emphasis here is on God's absolute power and might over everything in the universe.

**REFLECT-**

- Sometimes we need to be reminded that the God to whom we pray each day is also the God who created all that exists and all things are under his will. Focus on verse 11 for today: in what parts of your life do you especially need God's strength and his peace?

**PRAY-**

O powerful God, I praise you and give thanks that, even though you are ruler of the universe, you still love and care for me. Amen.

Tuesday, January 7, 2014

**READ-** *The Old Testament: Isaiah 42:1-9*

This passage is one of four "servant songs" found in Isaiah, making clear God's priority of Israel being a nation which works to bring justice and mercy to those who are in need or oppressed. Jesus personified this mission of justice and mercy in the way he lived and what he taught us.

**REFLECT-**

- What do you do in your daily life that helps in some way to bring justice to someone who needs it or show compassion to someone hurting or in need? What should we as a church family be doing to more fully live into these commandments from God given us by the prophets and by Christ?

**PRAY-**

Lord, help me to see today where I can be an instrument of justice, peace and compassion. Guide me that I may know the best way to respond and have courage to do so. Amen.

Wednesday, January 8, 2014

**READ-** *Acts of the Apostles 10:34-43*

Peter is speaking here to the household of Cornelius, the Gentile centurion who sent for Peter in response to a dream from God. Peter also had a dream in which God told him that anything God accepts as clean, we should do likewise. Peter understood then that salvation was for all people, not just for the Jews and he affirms that here with Cornelius.

**REFLECT-**

- Who do you see as unacceptable to be welcomed into Christ's church? The Jews believed that Gentiles were living in sin because they did not keep the strict Jewish laws. How does that influence what you may view as sinful behavior for which we often exclude persons from our church community?

**PRAY-**

Father, help me to let go of my personal biases, fears of persons who are different from me, and to try to see people as you see them – as your beloved children – and treat them accordingly. Amen.

Thursday, January 9, 2014

**READ-** *The Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17*

It seems strange that Jesus would insist on being baptized by John, who clearly understood at this point that Jesus was the Messiah whom he had proclaimed. Jesus told John that this baptism would fulfill God's will and the signs of the dove and the voice which were witnessed by those there gave further affirmation to Christ's identity and blessing from God.

**REFLECT-**

- Baptism offers us forgiveness of our sin, a washing away for new life, and a participation in the ministry of Christ in the world. We are made "new creatures" whose focus must be to love and serve God and our neighbor. Are you fully "living into" your baptism?

**PRAY-**

O God, make my heart pure and centered on you and your will for my life. Help me to live in such a way that you will be "well pleased" with me – your beloved child. Amen.

Friday, January 10, 2014

**ACT-**

**Focus Verse:** *Acts 10:42*

**He commanded us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.**

We often miss opportunities in our daily life to share our testimony of what Jesus has done for us with other people. How has God touched your life this week? What great blessings have you received? Is there a friend, relative or a stranger whom you meet who needs to hear about that from you? We might feel intimidated by the word "preach", but Peter is simply encouraging people to go and tell others what remarkable things God has done in your life and offer them the same opportunity through faith in Christ. You can do it today – it will be a blessing.