



Monday, February 10, 2014

**READ-** The Psalter: Psalm 119:1-8

The psalmist affirms here that those who keep God's commands will be right with God. Yet some doubt and concern creeps into his words in verses 5-6. Can he really keep God's commands or will he be put to shame? That fear of abandonment by God because of sin rings clear in the final verse of the passage.

**REFLECT-**

- Thankfully, we have an assurance of grace and forgiveness because of Jesus Christ that the psalmist lacked. Because we are sinful creatures and cannot, on our own, keep God's commands perfectly, we must rely on the grace given us through Christ.

**PRAY-**

Lord, I praise you for the gift of your Son Jesus, who came that I might never have to fear the grip of sin. Thank you that you are always with me and will never leave me. Amen.

Tuesday, February 11, 2014

**READ-** Old Testament: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

There was a prevailing thought expressed throughout the Old Testament that those who obey God will prosper and be blessed and those who sin will be punished. Moses here calls the people back to God from the pagan idols they have begun to worship and threatens the withholding of God's favor if they do not.

**REFLECT-**

- Unfortunately, life experience tells us that good people do suffer and those who do evil sometimes prosper. But, God's blessing comes to us whatever our life circumstances in just the way we need most. Christ assures us of that promise.

**PRAY-**

Father, help me to trust you and to be faithful, knowing that you will care for me, comfort me, and provide what I need. Use me as an instrument of your care and love for others in their time of need. Amen.

Wednesday, February 12, 2014

**READ-** The Epistle: I Corinthians 3:1-9

Paul writes here about a church family who can't seem to get along. Divisions have sprung up among them concerning their allegiance to Paul or Apollos – their rabbis in the faith. Paul rebukes them, telling them their only allegiance should be to Christ and that their behavior is not acceptable to God.

**REFLECT-**

- Where in our congregation do you see divisions, jealousy, resentment, gossip or quarreling? What issues within our church are divisive and promote these feelings? What would Paul tell us to do to bring healing and wholeness in these situations?

**PRAY-**

Father, help me to keep my focus on your will and to live in loving relationships with those in my church family and community. Amen.

Thursday, February 13, 2014

**READ-** The Gospel: Matthew 5:21-37

Jesus here is interpreting Jewish law for his listeners in ways they have likely never heard before. He holds us to a higher standard of what is true and right before God, not just the "letter of the law". He looks deeper at our inner thoughts and intentions for sin, not just at our overt behavior.

**REFLECT-**

- Jesus' words here may seem harsh or extreme to us. How on earth are we to police our thoughts and emotions to this degree? Yet they were intended to promote loving, healing, and moral behavior that offset many of the injustices and inequities in his society, particularly for women.

**PRAY-**

O God, create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Amen.

Friday, February 14, 2014

**ACT-**

Focus Verse: Matthew 5:23-24

*So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come offer your gift.*

Before you come to worship God on Sunday, is there someone with whom you need to be reconciled? Whether or not it is your "fault" or theirs, no matter who initiated the conflict, no matter whether your differences with that person are justified or not, Jesus says, "Go and be reconciled." Reach out to that person in some way. Pick up the phone, send a card or letter, go visit them – ask them to lunch or cook them dinner. You have no control over whether your effort will be accepted; you can only be obedient. "Go."