



Monday, December 13, 2010

**READ-** The Psalter: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

This psalm is a plea on behalf of the people for God to have mercy and relieve their suffering. The psalmist interprets their suffering as punishment from God and asks that God use his mighty power to set things right once more.

**REFLECT-**

- In times when it seems that everything is going wrong and there is nothing but evil in the world, we may feel God has abandoned us and does not care. We would do well to listen to the psalmist who remains confident that God can and will resolve the wrongs and prevail over evil.

**PRAY-**

Lord, help me always to trust you and look to you for my help in all circumstances. Let your face shine through me today! Amen.

Tuesday, December 14, 2010

**READ-** Old Testament: Isaiah 7:10-16

Isaiah challenges King Ahaz to ask for a sign from God to give him guidance on how he should deal with political and social problems in Judah. The king refuses, but Isaiah prophesies the birth of a child as the sign. We believe the child Isaiah foretold to be Jesus Christ.

**REFLECT-**

- Ahaz refused to seek God's guidance, possibly because he had his own agenda and was determined to pursue it. His lack of faith and trust in God to lead the nation of Judah resulted in Judah being conquered by their warring neighbors. Where in your life are you failing to seek God's guidance or follow it?

**PRAY-**

Gracious God, help me always to turn to you for direction in the way I live my life. Help me to be always listening for your voice and make me obedient to your will. Amen.

Wednesday, December 15, 2010

**READ-** The Epistle: Romans 1:1-7

Paul's greeting at the start of his letter to the Roman church is his personal statement of faith and action in Jesus Christ. He announces Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy in the Hebrew scripture, God-in-flesh come to show us how to live and dying to atone for our sins and reconcile us with the Father, then rising to overcome death.

**REFLECT-**

- In verse 7, Paul says that all those who love Christ are called to be "saints". We usually think of that term as those who have lived extraordinary lives of faith who are now dead. Yet Paul maintained that all Christians are called that role. What does that mean to you? In what ways are you trying to live into your "sainthood" now?

**PRAY-**

Loving Father, I know that I cannot attain true righteousness on my own, but only through the sacrifice of Jesus and your great mercy. Help me to grow in grace, faith, compassion and devotion to you each day. Amen.

Thursday, December 16, 2010

**READ-** The Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25

Without Joseph's obedience to the words of the angel and his compassion for Mary, Jesus might have never been born. Had he chosen differently, Mary might have been stoned to death for adultery. We know that after Jesus' birth, he again listened to an angel's warning in a dream and took his family away to Egypt to avoid Herod's infanticide.

**REFLECT-**

- Think how hard it must have been for Joseph to believe the words of the angel about Mary's pregnancy. Would you have believed? Joseph's trust and courage was a major turning point in the coming of our Savior. Is there a decision facing you in which you must simply trust God and step out in faith?

**PRAY-**

O God, you never promised that living faithfully will be easy; only that you will be with us, giving us your comfort, strength and peace. Amen.

Friday, December 17, 2010

**READ-** Sermon Text: Luke 2:8-20

The angels announced Christ's birth on a lonely hillside to folks who were on the lower levels of the social strata of that day, not to powerful kings. Like Joseph, they were afraid at first, but they trusted and believed the words of the angels enough to go straight to Bethlehem.

**REFLECT-**

- Why do you think God chose to proclaim the birth of his Son to shepherds in the fields rather than someone in a position of power? Their simple trust and immediate response were exactly what Jesus told us that God wants from us.

**PRAY-**

Open my eyes, ears and heart to your message today, Lord. Amen.