



Wednesday, August 8, 2012

**READ - The Old Testament: || Samuel 18:5-9, 31-33**

David's son Absalom has made an attempt to overthrow his father and seize the throne. David and Absalom had a history of difficulty with Absalom living in exile for several years prior; yet he is still David's son and he dreads what must happen for him to retain his throne.

**REFLECT -**

- We see in this story a formerly powerful man who must choose between family loyalties and his duty as monarch. Rather than accompany his troops after Absalom and his followers, David hangs back, leaving the inevitable task of killing his son to his troops. He asks for mercy; yet seems to know that is not to be. Desire for worldly power often ends tragically.

**PRAY -**

Lord, help me to focus on your priorities of love rather than the things our culture values which often bring heartbreak and suffering. Amen.

Monday, August 6, 2012

**READ - The Psalter: Psalm 130**

Anyone who has ever experienced deep grief or suffering can identify with the psalmist's opening cry in this passage. As human beings, we are not worthy of God's love and care because of our sin; yet the psalmist affirms that we must wait for God and we will not be disappointed. God is faithful even when we are not.

**REFLECT -**

- What is your soul "waiting on" right now to come from God? Peace? Strength? Guidance? Comfort? Waiting is hard – we want everything immediately. Yet God often teaches and shapes us through that time of waiting.

**PRAY -**

Lord, help me to stay focused on you, aware of the movement of your Spirit, so that when your direction comes, I may be ready. Amen.

Tuesday, August 7, 2012

**READ - The Epistle: Ephesians 4:25-5:2**

These are simple, basic rules for Christian living. Paul encouraged new converts to the faith to change their ways to reflect the example of Christ rather than that of their culture or those of pagan religions around them.

**REFLECT -**

- Although these rules are simple and straightforward, they are often hard to abide by. Life is often unfair and evil seems to prevail over good. How then are we to be honest, kind, forgiving, and industrious? Staying focused on the life of Jesus and his example empowers us to trust God and work for his good purposes. How may you be struggling today to maintain these simple rules of living? Offer that struggle to God in prayer.

**PRAY -**

Father, help me to love and serve today so that you may be glorified. Amen.

Thursday, August 9, 2012

**READ - The Gospel: John 6:35, 41-51**

Jesus spoke in parables and used metaphors to help people understand eternal concepts. Bread was necessary for life in his culture – it was a basic element of their diet. Like the manna sent to their ancestors in the wilderness, Jesus was sent to the world to save our lives through faith in him and his sacrifice on the cross.

**REFLECT -**

- In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to ask for our "daily bread". Do you spend time in prayer with Him daily, allowing Him to nourish and sustain you? We need his love and guidance, just as we need food to live. Is your soul starving for that "bread of life"?

**PRAY -**

O God, feed me today with that "bread of life" so that I may never be hungry for your presence and power. Amen.

Friday, August 10, 2012

**READ - Sermon Text: Matthew 25:25-34**

In the last of Jesus' public teachings, he spells out how we as his followers will be judged. Jesus leaves no doubt of God's priorities – caring for the hungry, those in need, the sick and suffering, and those in prison. In response to God's love for us, we are to care for the "least of these".

**REFLECT -**

- In a world in which there is so much evil, need and suffering, it is easy to become overwhelmed and discouraged. Yet Christian people, working together, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can offer care and compassion – one person at a time. How are you being called to help the "least of these"? How will you respond?

**PRAY -**

O God, help me to make your priorities my priorities. Help me to live into Jesus' commands to love one another with my time and resources. Amen.