

Advent, Daily Readings – Week 1

Advent 2015 daily reflections

Monday December 7

Scripture Passages Isaiah 35:1-10 Luke 5: 17-26

*Scripture Verse: When he saw their faith, Jesus said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."
Luke 5:20*

Isaiah prophesied warnings to the people of Israel when kings and people went astray. He prophesied danger from their enemies in his people's future. But he also encouraged them with a vision of hope: a walk on a safe highway toward God's sacred city—and a celebration at journey's end.

In the gospel we see Jesus also giving hope and the opportunity to literally walk safely home. When we see him today with the paralytic, whose friends had just lowered him through the roof to be with Jesus, we have the expectation that this man will surely be helped to walk. The crowd expected that too but they were astonished that Jesus first forgave the man's sins.

For us Jesus is the "Holy Way". As we try to walk his path in life, we walk in holiness. When Jesus heals whatever may be paralyzing us and we experience being forgiven by God, we are freed to walk in the direction of home and all that the word "home" implies: a place of safety, rest, celebration and communion where we dwell with God and those we love.

In Advent we reflect on where our "highways" in life are leading us and ask ourselves if we need to get back on the path of Jesus

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to recognize the holy moments of each day. Help us to be aware that we never walk alone and that it is the path of Jesus that will lead us home. Amen.

Tuesday December 8

Genesis 3: 9-15, 20; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12 Luke 1:26-38

*Scripture Verse: Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word
Luke 1:38*

The Genesis passage begins with shame for having disobeyed God. It ends with God's tender gesture as Eve is acknowledged to be "the mother of all living."

The gospel begins with a perplexing greeting from an angel and ends with Mary agreeing to do the will of God.

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians writes about God adopting us as his children through Christ.

No matter what we might do to botch it up, God has promised—since before the beginning of time—to love human beings.

We see God's love in the tender gesture God used when people made mistakes and felt ashamed right from the start, We see the respectful love of God through sending an angel to request a free response from Mary. We see how God's plan for salvation was dependant upon her answer.

Today in Advent we remember Mary without whom we would not have Christmas. We remember that through her "yes", we have become adopted sisters and brothers of Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to be open to messages and messengers from you. Grant us the gift of discerning faith and help us as we say "yes" to trying to do your will. Amen

Wednesday December 9

Scripture Passages Isaiah 40:1-11, Matthew 18:12-14

Scripture Verse: So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost Matthew 18:14

Jesus taught that there is a place in God's love for those who are lost. He teaches in parables about the prodigal son or, today, the lost sheep, about God's immeasurable love. God doesn't give up on those who are lost; rather God rejoices when they are found.

Isaiah writes that "every mountain and hill (would) be made low." and "make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

The highway of yesterday's reading was the way home. Whether it is the prodigal son returning home to a waiting father or a lost sheep being carried home by the shepherd, there is a path through the wilderness.

When we come down from our mountains (perhaps a symbol of human "pride" or "smugness"?) , we may feel a little lost and have to place our trust in God.

In Advent we reflect on how much we trust that God will be with us even when you are discouraged and/or feel lost.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to accept the reality that through your Holy Spirit you offer us a gentle guiding force that helps us to make Jesus' path in life our way of life as followers of Jesus.

Thursday December 10

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 41:13-20 Matthew 11: 11-15

Scripture Verse: When the poor and needy seek water and there is none...I the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them” Isaiah 41:17

During the exile of the Jewish people from the Promised Land, Isaiah was called by God to keep the people’s faith alive during those difficult years. To express the promise God made to never forsake Israel, Isaiah often used the image of water—an image for life and precious to desert dwellers. Through Isaiah, God wanted Israel to understand that when good things happen for them that He, “the Holy One of Israel has created it.” Isaiah 41:20

When a voice cried out in the desert cried out in Jesus’ time, it was his cousin John who called people to turn back to God. John invited people to be washed in the Jordan River as he offered the healing force of repentance to those who had become estranged from God .

Both John and Isaiah remind us that God had not forsaken the people, but if they had forsaken God, there was always a way to come back.

In Advent we remember John the Baptist who prepared people to be ready for the Kingdom of God. It is Jesus who would open the door to that kingdom, explain it and invite us and all kinds of people into it.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you that when we have done wrong, you are willing to forgive us. We thank you for your faithfulness to us. Help us, as forgiven sinners, to accept Jesus’ invitation into the life of your kingdom. Help us to allow our lives to be shaped by your forgiving love.

Friday December 11

Scripture Readings: Psalm 80, Matthew 17: 10-13

Scripture Verse: “I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased.” Matthew 17:12

Prophets do not win popularity contests. From Jeremiah to John the Baptist and beyond, the Bible records how God’s prophets were ignored, persecuted and even put to death. Prophets make us uncomfortable. They challenge us. Most of all, they call us to change our ways. This are not things we generally like to hear.

Are there prophetic voices in our own day? There are undoubtedly many...people who call us to greater faithfulness, people who challenge us to be more compassionate, who urge us to develop a simpler lifestyle...people to suggest that we become less judgemental...people who remind us

that we are to care for God's world and treat all people with respect. There are the voices that irk us and make us uncomfortable. Many are voices God wants us to listen to.

In Advent we reflect on the prophetic ministry of Jesus, the Son of God and give thanks that the prophetic voice is still part of Jesus' church.

Prayer: Heavenly Father who came among us as one of us in Jesus, give us the courage and humility to listen to the voices of the prophets in our own day