

Daily Readings

This is the first Sunday of the year. Many of us will be making “New Year’s Resolutions.” As you consider your resolutions for the New Year, use these passages that encourage an active spirit, growing in faith each day. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday, January 4 – Read Galatians 5: 22. We often see “fruits” as those good deeds that we may accomplish for others. But literally fruits are the attitudes by which all our actions are guided. Paul includes, “**Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.**” Which of these “fruits” do you find most often in your life?

Tuesday, January 5 – Read Ephesians 2: 1-10. Clearly we are saved by faith and by faith alone. As Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2:8, salvation is not any of our own doing but it is a gift from God. Too many Christians stop at the point of salvation. They have received the gift of justification, but now what? We have been saved for a purpose: to be sanctified in the spirit of Christ for “good works.”

Wednesday, January 6 – Read II Corinthians 9: 6-15. Paul uses the image of the harvest as an analogy of living in the spirit. The more we invest ourselves in the work and spirit of Christ, the more we will receive from that participation. How can we expect to grow in the spirit without participating in the things of God? What is Christ calling you to do this week?

Thursday, January 7 – Read James 2: 14-26. James proclaims that faith without works is dead. Does our works or faith justify us before God? Clearly, we are justified by faith, but works proclaim our faith. In a way, we are blessed to be a blessing for others. Who do you need to bless this day?

Friday, January – Read Psalm 8. Pray this Psalm as your prayer for the day. Spend time giving thanks. Share with a friend or family (especially children) five things that make you smile. Let the spirit of Christ be your source and strength. Abide in Christ.



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS Sunday, January 3, 2010

How Long Will We Remember? 2009 — A Year of God at Work

Luke 2:25-33— The Word from the Bible (TNIV)

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

Surprised and Amazed

As we move on from the Christmas story, the shepherds have gone back to their sheep, and Joseph and Mary have returned to Nazareth. We can imagine Joseph putting up with irate customers in the carpenter shop while Mary was washing diapers. The glamour is gone, and life is back to normal. We pick up Luke’s narrative with Mary and Joseph going through the ritual activities, taking their baby to the temple in Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice. Mary and Joseph were proceeding with all the usual Jewish customs in connection with this most unusual infant.

To begin with, we learn how poor Mary and Joseph were because they have brought two turtle doves to sacrifice for the ritual of cleansing, whereas the usual sacrifice was a lamb. The mother of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world could not afford a lamb. And while she and Joseph were sacrificing their turtle doves, Simeon addressed her directly, warning her that a sword would pierce her soul. At that moment did she remember the words of the angel’s greeting, “Blessed are you among women?” She was to suffer poverty and pain and yet she was most blessed among women. Poverty is a relative thing. Mary and Joseph had nothing, but they had everything.

In the temple they met two Jewish prophets, Simeon and Anna. The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon, and he recognized this baby and His importance for both Israel and the Gentiles. No angels appeared this time as they did to Zechariah, to Mary and to the shepherds. This revelation came through a faithful believer, just and devout, who was a prophet through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Actually, what Simeon said was not exactly a prophecy. In the Greek, his words give the image of a servant who has been instructed by his master to stay at his post until a certain visitor arrives. Simeon had been watching all night and was sleepy. When the visitor finally came in the early hours of the morning, he said, “Master, it’s happened. I have announced the coming of the one you’re waiting for. Now I can go to sleep.” Having seen the consolation of Israel, Simeon was telling God that he was ready to die in peace.

It does seem rather strange that Mary and Joseph are “**amazed**” or “**marveled**” at the prophecy of Simeon and later the words of Anna. Why are they amazed? Each has experienced an incredible series of events. Each has had conversations with angels. Each has witnessed to the divine nature of the child. Mary is quoted earlier in Luke singing about the special mission of this child. What has happened to them in the meantime? Have they forgotten? Has the normal schedule of everyday life pushed the promises of God to the side? Do they need to be reminded again of what God is doing? Do we?

Luke tells us that the encounter astounded Mary and Joseph. There is irony in Luke’s words as he reports the reaction of Mary and Joseph. Like so many before and after, Mary and Joseph have experienced the power and presence of God. Yet, they forget and are further “**amazed**” when God speaks again. They experience a further sign from God in the person of Anna. By any estimate, she was at least a hundred and three years old. At that time, thirteen was the minimal age to marry, and when we add all the other figures given us by Luke, we find that Anna must have been very advanced in years. Luke gives us this information to further support her wisdom and insight. This woman was no “passer by”, she was a devout follower who daily experienced the presence of God.

Simeon and Anna were true prophets. They were not prophets in the sense of future telling or fortune telling. Prophecy is the act of speaking for God to a person or a nation about that person’s or that nation’s unrighteousness and about those things they might do to be faithful and obedient. The true prophet speaks to us of our sins, our false values and in unloving behavior.

The most important lessons in this particular Scripture are that we must live in hope and anticipation of what is to come. It seems that Mary and Joseph have returned to their regular routines, forgetting about what God is about to do. This will not be the last time Mary is “**amazed**” or “**confused**” by the divine actions of Jesus. When Jesus is 12 and gets left behind at the temple, “**astounding the scholars,**” Luke tells us that Mary lacks understanding. Even at the wedding feast, when Jesus turns water into wine, Mary seems to understand Jesus’ authority, but not His divinity.

How easy we forget

It seems to be common to the human condition to forget what God has done and what God is doing. We live in the now, looking back to easily explain away our divine moments with our Lord. In those moments of doubt we give away our hope and connection to God.

But here is the good news. God never gave up on Mary, Joseph, the disciples or any of the followers. The reminders kept coming until they “got it”. When they did “get it” that’s when hope and power took over and incredible things began to happen in their lives. Now don’t misunderstand, Mary would never be considered rich in any worldly definition of “rich”. Yet, Mary is considered to be bless beyond measure.

God will never give up on us. In the same fashion, God wants to bless us. God is just waiting for us to “get it.” God is waiting for us to bow before the throne, to remember with confidence what God has done, and to look with anticipation for the blessings that are right in front of us.

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Here are a few prayers to guide you. These prayers were written with the season of Advent in mind. They were listed on the Creighton University online ministry page. Often we feel rushed and anxious during December. Hopefully these prayers will help you focus on the presence of God as you start each day or as you face a day full of activities and pressure.

John Wesley’s Covenant Prayer

(This prayer is from the John Wesley Covenant Service, we will be praying it together as we complete Holy Communion today. Take this copy home to remind yourself of the prayer you have prayed today.)

I am no longer my own, but Yours.

Put me to what You will, rank me with whom You will;

put me to doing, put me to suffering;

let me be employed for You or laid aside for You,

exalted for You or brought low for You;

let me be full, let me be empty;

let me have all things, let me have nothing;

I freely and heartily yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

You are mine, and I am Yours. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Have a great week!

Don’t forget the great series that begins next week. Invite your friends and don’t miss one single Sunday.

God is doing great things at Trietsch!

Tell someone you love them today.