

Daily Readings

Please note: This week we continue our study of the book of Acts. Read and reread each passage to get a sense of the total dependence these early followers gave to the Holy Spirit.

Monday, June 29 – Read Acts 20:17-38. Paul is speaking to his friends in the church at Ephesus. He reminds them of his sacrificial style of ministry. Paul does not shrink from the challenges and potential dangers of the message of Christ. He knew that suffering awaited him in the days ahead, but he was under the compulsion of the Holy Spirit to continue his journey. Paul knows that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem are plotting to arrest him, yet he continues on to Jerusalem convinced that this is where the spirit of God is leading him. Has your faith ever led you to a dangerous place? What is the greatest risk you have ever taken for the gospel of Christ? Would you be willing to risk your life for Jesus, if it were asked?

Tuesday, June 30 – Read Acts 21:1-16. Now Luke gives us a brief explanation of Paul's journey by sea from Ephesus to Caesarea. Paul stops in several ports on the way. At Tyre and Ptolemaist, Paul stayed with some of the disciples from the area. In each case, they warned Paul not to journey on to Jerusalem because of the plot to arrest and execute him. Paul continues on praying with each group, but he is not persuaded to change his plans to travel on to Jerusalem. Where is God leading you in your life and faith right now? What obstacles are standing in your way of achieving God's will for your life? Are you worshipping each week, studying the scripture each day and in constant prayer?

Wednesday, July 1 – Read Acts 21:17-26. With this passage, the arrest and imprisonment of Paul begins. In verses 17-26, Paul arrives in Jerusalem and meets with James and other church leaders. The Jewish Christians are taking issue with Paul's acceptance of Gentiles without circumcision and the observance of the food laws. Paul tries to make amends by going through a rite of purification to pacify these objections. We know from Paul's writings that he believes the work of Jesus the Christ is above the Law of Moses. Paul is willing to do anything short of compromising his faith in Christ to make peace with others. Are you willing to make peace with others in your life? How have you allowed practice and tradition to separate you from others? Is there anything you can do to show your love and concern for these persons?

Thursday, July 2 – Acts 21:27-40. Paul is accused of subverting the Jewish law and traditions. They drag him out of the temple and into the street to beat him to death. The riot is so intense that the tribune is summoned. Paul is then put in chains by the authorities to sort out whether Paul is guilty of some crime. Not one person seems to be coming to Paul's defense. Have there been times in your life when you felt as if the whole world was against you? Did you give up or continue to work against the opposition? Was your cause noble? How did it end?

Friday, July 3 – Read Acts 21:37-22:31. In making his defense, Paul recounts his conversion to those listening. The crowd still wants Paul killed, but the tribune decides to interrogate him by flogging or beating him. This was a practice that would often end with the death of the one being questioned. In the process, Paul reveals that he is a Roman citizen by birth. As a Roman citizen, Paul has certain rights to a fair trial without punishment until he is found guilty. Even binding a Roman citizen without just cause is an offense. Paul's situation goes from dire to hopeful — Paul, once a victim, is now a threatening presence to the authorities in Jerusalem. God works in mysterious ways. How have you seen situations change when God is present? Paul birthright was established long before this visit to Jerusalem. Yet, it is the birthright that is Paul's greatest strength in dealing with the authorities of Jerusalem. How have you seen God preparing you or others long before the situation warrants the need?



TRIETSCH

STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, June 28, 2009

Down on the Bayou (Week 4 of 4)

The Watering Hole

John 4:13-14

The Word from the Bible (Today's New International Version)

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

John 6:35

The Word from the Bible (Today's New International Version)

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

Living Water — John 4:7-26

The above scripture quote from Jesus takes place in a conversation Jesus has with a Samaritan woman during his travel through Samaria. On the surface, this seems to be a chance conversation. Yet it is undoubtedly a providential development that anticipates the spread of the gospel, first in Jerusalem and Judea, then in Samaria, then to the ends of the earth. (Act 1:6)

Jesus' willingness to enter into communication with the Samaritan woman, and specifically with a woman of disrepute, is a circumstance as startling to the woman herself as it is to Jesus' disciples. This comes as another example that the Jesus, savior of the world, came to **"seek and to save the lost."** (Luke 19:10)

John 4:7-15

Jesus' discourse with the woman, like that with Nicodemus (3:1-15), develops on two levels of meaning. The woman thinks of water as a physical necessity for human existence, whether it comes from wells or cisterns, fountains or streams. The water supply in Palestine is not always sufficient, much less abundant. Jesus, however, speaks of living — that is "flowing water," as a sign of eternal life. In the case of this "living" or spiritual water, its source comes not from a physical source but rather from an eternal source — God.

Jesus **IS** this gift of life-giving water. He will later make this more explicit (7:37-39) and identify the living water with the Holy Spirit. Many interpreters see here also a cryptic reference to baptism, such as the reference to water and Spirit in the discourse with Nicodemus.

John 4:16-26

When Jesus reveals his supernatural insight into the personal life of the woman, she begins to understand the eternal nature of the living water of Jesus. She responds to Jesus challenge with belief and acceptance of the new life that Jesus offers.

The Bread of Life – John 6:27-40

This dialogue has close parallels with the conversation Jesus has with the Samaritan woman in chapter 4. The symbol of bread here is comparable to the symbol of water there. The bread given in the miracle of feeding, as well as the manna given to God’s people in the wilderness, is perishable, sufficing only for the day. It cannot give life to the world, much less eternal life.

Jewish writers and teachers had all used the manna as a type of life in the world to come. Now this true bread, the word of God, this heavenly food, this life raised up at the last day is revealed. And faith in him is fulfillment in doing the will and the work of God.

The Watering Hole – What are you feeding your soul?

To grow spiritually strong, we must cultivate holy habits in our lives.

Drink from the Living Water of Life

We drink from God’s living water through prayer and worship. Unfortunately, most in our culture are so busy and consumed by the demands of our culture they leave no time to drink from the deep spiritual waters of prayer and worship. Drinking from these waters gives us a new perspective that affects and enriches all of life.

Eat the Bread of Life

Only by eating from the bread of life offered in worship, personal Bible study, and the mutual accountability of Christian fellowship can we find strength for living in these difficult times. Unfortunately, too many in our culture eat an unhealthy spiritual diet. Much like the poor eating habits we develop with fast food and comfort snacks, we feed our souls with empty habits that entertain with no substance.

Its all about the herd

Animals travel in herds, flocks, schools, prides, and the like depending on the species. They do this for a reason. The community of these gatherings provides safety, security, value, and support. Is your herd or tribe supporting the holy habits that bring life and value? Does it build up or destroy life and build life?

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. Feel free to pull out your cell phone to Twitter, Facebook or text friends and neighbors not attending this service. We want the message of Christ to reach out beyond the walls of this building into the hearts of everyone possible.

In addition to texting your ideas and impressions of the worship service to friends outside the service, share your prayers with others. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

This morning, let the spirit of God lead you in your prayers. Some prayers will come immediately to mind because of a known need. Let other names come to mind, pray for these persons even if you do not know why God is leading you to pray for them. Spend time counting your blessings and giving thanks to God for all God’s good gifts. If there is a difficult situation in your life right now, we invite you to release it to God during this worship service. It will be there after the benediction.

Please consider making the following part of your prayers this morning:

God, as I look at the patterns of life, I learn more about your intentions for how I should live. Teach me Lord to rely on you more each day in prayer and worship. Lord give me your living water. Teach me Lord the importance of the diet of your Word. Give me inspiration and new understandings for the week to come. Teach me Lord about my need for others, about the importance of caring for others, and about why my strength alone isn’t adequate for making my journey. Amen.

Our nation and its leaders as it struggles to find its way economically and socially

Our world torn by war and strife

Our community and the challenges each household faces

Our Church –

Pray God will lead our church deeper into prayer

Pray God will lead each person here into a deeper relationship with Christ through worship and Bible study

Pray God will use our the coming concerts as an opportunity to reach others for Christ

Pray God will continue to provide adult volunteers for the children’s Sunday school

Pray God will bless and lead our church leaders, pastors, and staff

Pray God will lead every participant into a deeper walk with Jesus

In Jesus’ name, Amen.