

Like a Tree Planted by the Waters (1st in the series on ***Growing Deeper in Your Faith***)

January 6, 2008

We believe in the primacy of Scripture that is divinely inspired by God. We accept the Bible as having authority for our lives and as the source of all that is "necessary" and "sufficient" for salvation. (Articles of Religion of the UMC) *"United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine. Through Scripture the living Christ meets us in the experience of redeeming grace. We are convinced that Jesus Christ is the living Word of God in our midst whom we trust in life and death."* (Book of Discipline UMC page 78)

Psalm 1:1-3

"...planted by streams of water."

The collection of writings we call the Psalms begins with a praise of God's word and law. The person who follows God is compared to a tree that has literally been "transplanted" to a place where it can flourish. Further, the Hebrew word translated "stream" is used in most cases to describe the "waters" or "streams" of the Garden of Eden. With this in mind, we can assume that the person who follows the ways of God will find peace, harmony and bliss. We may live in chaos and turmoil now, but the Word "transplants" us to a place of order and security.

"...yield fruit in its season,"

The value of a tree is measured in its ability to *"yield fruit in its season."* Not only does the faithful follower experience the bliss of Eden, but is productive in life.

"...their leaves do not wither."

Leaves that "do not wither" are symbolic of eternal life. We find ourselves with questions about life. Doubt, fear, and anxiety can steal our faith. The psalmist wants his reader to be confident. The Word of God stands as a rock and anchor. The Word is eternal and those that lean upon its message are secure.

Scripture: *Refocusing our task*

In 1988, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church reaffirmed its historical position on the primacy of scripture. Scripture is our supreme guide on matters of faith and salvation. We get to the core of God's Word by using the tradition of the church, our experience of God's presence and the resources of reason. As such, the Word of God becomes a new word of revelation for every day. Just as God "spoke" at creation; just as the Word became flesh in Jesus Christ, so the Word now guides us to even greater paths of love, joy, and peace.

Please note: The following daily readings allows you to study other passages that speak to the place of scripture in our lives. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday – Read *Isaiah 55:10-11*. Isaiah compares the Word of God to the work of rain and snow in creation. By its nature, rain and snow can do no other than water and replenish the soil. In the same way, when the Word of God is read, studied, or acted upon, it gives life. Memorize a favorite passage from the scriptures and recite the passage as you go through the day. What was your experience?

Tuesday – Read *James 1:22-25*. "Be doers of the word and not hearers only." We find many forms of writing in the Bible from poetry to history. These forms can confuse us and make understanding difficult. Our lack of understanding can inhibit our development as Christians. Organized Bible studies can accelerate our understanding. This understanding can move us from "hearing" to "doing." What part does scripture play in your life? Are you a "hearer" or "doer?" What is scripture calling you to do?

Wednesday – Read *Psalms 119:115*. Light is a metaphor for the working of God. The Word is seen as a light. The writer of this Psalm wants us to understand that when the way is dark, the Word is there to light our path. Where are the dark places of your life? Are you willing to let the light of the Word shine in those places?

Thursday – Read *John 2:3-6*. I love this passage of scripture. The popular "WWJD" (what would Jesus do) is stated here. "Walk just as he walked." The proof of ones devotion is found in the way one walks. Or as a friend of mine says, "If it walks like a duck, it must be a duck." How do you walk?

Friday – Read *Isaiah 40:8*. There are those who question the authority of scripture because of its antiquity. The scripture may be old, but the message and the messenger are timeless. The Bible has no equal. As a divinely inspired work, its words continue to be as relevant today as they were centuries ago. Hold your Bible in your hands. Thank God for the gift.

Have a great week!

See you next Sunday, January 13, for **Growing Deeper through Worship**