

Monday, June 15, 2020

Daily Lectionary Passages:

Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; Joshua 1:1-11 &
1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45 (NRSV)

O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wonderful works.
Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually.
Remember the wonderful works he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he has uttered,
O offspring of his servant Abraham,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.
He is the Lord our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.
He is mindful of his covenant forever,
of the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
the covenant that he made with Abraham,
his sworn promise to Isaac,
which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan
as your portion for an inheritance."
Then he brought Israel out with silver and gold,
and there was no one among their tribes who stumbled.
Egypt was glad when they departed,
for dread of them had fallen upon it.
He spread a cloud for a covering,
and fire to give light by night.
They asked, and he brought quails,
and gave them food from heaven in abundance.
He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed through the desert like a river.
For he remembered his holy promise,
and Abraham, his servant.
So he brought his people out with joy,
his chosen ones with singing.
He gave them the lands of the nations,
and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples,
that they might keep his statutes
and observe his laws.
Praise the Lord!



Thought:

The other evening, Zoe wanted to play “Hide & Seek.” Karen and Zoe had stopped by for a moment, but Zoe wanted to stay a little longer. So, let’s play a game. Hide & Seek was the first thing she that came to mind. It is a fun game to play with children. Finding a clever place to hide, searching for the other. Kids can play it for hours. Seeking the Lord is not a game of Hide & Seek. God is not hiding from us and we need to find Him. If that was the case, God could come up with literally the best hiding places since He made them.

Seeking the Lord is keeping our eyes open looking at what God is doing. Part of how this Psalm seeks the Lord is by remembering what God has done in the past. God has kept His promises to give Israel the Promised Land. God will continue to keep His promises. Today, we are to look and see where God is working. God is present in His creation. God is also present in His children. Look for signs of God’s presence. Then, spent time giving thanks and glory to God for His faithfulness.

Joshua 1:1-11 (NRSV)

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying, “My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, “Pass through the camp, and command the people: ‘Prepare your provisions; for in three days you are to cross over the Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess.’”

Thought:

When I want to make a point in my writing, I underline it, put it in bold, a bigger font, or italics. If I really want to make it stand out, I do usually use a couple of those. In scripture, the way to make a point is to state it twice. If it is written three times, it is double underlining. In this passage, God told Joshua “Be strong and courageous” three times. Now, if Moses said something three times, Joshua would have listened. When God said it three times, Joshua took notice. And, we should take notice.

Something new is happening. Moses was the last of generation that had come out of Egypt and wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Now, this new nation is coming into the land God had promised to Abraham back in Genesis. God will no longer be as visible. When Israel crosses the Jordan, there will be no more manna and quail. The fire by night and cloud by day will be gone. Instead, Joshua will be faced with the giants the spies feared forty years before. God commands Joshua to be strong and courageous in the midst of the battles ahead.

As we face struggles in life, God tells us to be strong and courageous. God is with us in the midst of battles. As with Joshua, God calls us to keep our focus on His word. We are to not

go to the right or to the left, but God where God is calling us. We are to keep God's scripture ever before us.

One way to have strength in the midst of life's struggles is to meditate on God's word day and night. At times, I have posted scripture on my bathroom mirror as a way to memorize it. Then, when a situation comes up, I have the passage on the tip of my tongue. "Be strong and courageous, I will not fail you or forsake you, says the Lord."

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5 (NRSV)

Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we decided to be left alone in Athens; and we sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in proclaiming the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith, so that no one would be shaken by these persecutions. Indeed, you yourselves know that this is what we are destined for. In fact, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer persecution; so it turned out, as you know. For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith; I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor had been in vain.

Thought:

When we follow the Lord, there will be battles against our faith. In the time of Paul, he warned them persecution would come. Even so, when it came, their faith was rattled. So, Paul sent Timothy to encourage them and help them keep God's word before them. This is part of why there are no Lone Ranger Christians. God did not call us to go it alone. God surrounds us with brothers and sisters to encourage us and protect us during difficult times.

For generations, the United States was a safe place for Christians. It was assumed that people were Christian and our laws were built off biblical principles. Now, we are living in a different time. While we may long to return to "simpler times," we need to live in a time when the Christian faith is alien within our lands. In 2019, only 65% claim to be Christian in polling. And, for many that is simply the "Christian lifestyle." This is down from 85% in 1990. In less 20 years it has gone from the norm to the sidelines. While we may lament what is lost, we should embrace where God has placed us. We are to live with the word of God before us, mediating on it day and night. We are to be in the world and not of the world. While it is easier to see what is outside the Christian faith, it will be harder to live by it. Part of that is because we will be persecuted. At those times, rely on the strength of the Lord and the support of your brothers and sisters.

Prayer:

Almighty God, we begin another week living in the uncertainties of our times. In the midst of this pandemic and the civil unrest, send your Spirit throughout our land. Give strength and guidance to your children. As you promised to be with Joshua, you have promised to be with those who follow your word. Guide us through your word to be your witness in our community. We give you thanks for brothers and sisters who strengthen us in our relationship with you. Lord, we pray for those facing surgery, recovery and major health issues this week. You know the people who are heavy on our hearts. We entrust them and ourselves to you. Lord, hear our prayer.

(Spend time in silent prayer, praying for those you know. Name them before God and place them in God's loving arms).

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

