

Thursday, May 7, 2020

Daily Lectionary Passages:

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; Genesis 12:1-3 &
Acts 6:8-15

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 (NRSV)

In you, O Lord, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.
Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.
You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.
Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.
My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.



Thought:

There are times when we experience fear and worries. Some of those times are when changes happen in life. Abram must have had some worries as he left his father's home and followed God (below). Stephen may have been filled with fear as he faced trial for his faith (also below). In daily life, we have events that lead to fear and worries: taking a new job, moving to be close to family, or getting married. It is easy to have fears, worries or emotions blind us from the faithfulness of God.

At these times, in faith we can say, "Into your hand I commit my spirit, you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God." We place our lives into God's hands. We trust that God is with us, guiding us in his ways. He is the only one who can be our refuge in the midst of the storms of life. We can be crippled with fear, or trust in the Lord knowing that He has redeemed us and will be faithful through all the chapters of our lives.

Genesis 12:1-3 (NRSV)

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Thought:

This is the beginning of us understanding God's plan of salvation for the world. In Genesis 1-11, we read of the prehistory of the world. God created everything and said, "it is very good." Even though Adam and Eve walked God, they turned from God and allowed sin to enter the world. Now, God reveals that he will bless the world through one person, one nation. That

one person is called to step out in faith and trust God. God asks Abram to give up everything known to him, to leave every support system and follow God. He only tells Abram, “I will show you...I will bless you...I will bless those who bless you.” Abram has a choice. He can stay where he is, or he can step out in faith and follow.

Most of the promise will never be fully seen by Abram. He will never see his family grow into a great nation. In fact, it will be years before he has a child. He will never live in the promised land. He will never see his family bless other nations. He will never see nations punished for cursing him. He will never see all the families of the earth blessed through Abram. Faith is trusting that God is about more than we will ever see. All too often, we think faith is a personal decision and only concerns our eternal salvation. While the call of Abram is unique, his faith affected the entire world. Our faith can be a blessing to others that we will never know.

Acts 6:8-15 (NRSV)

Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. Then they secretly instigated some men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council. They set up false witnesses who said, “This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us.” And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Thought:

Someone once told me, “God never said ministry would be easy, only that God would be faithful.” Following Jesus is sometimes difficult. Seldom is it as difficult as it was for Stephen. He was filled with the Spirit and teaching the truth about the grace and love found in Jesus Christ. Even so, some saw this as a threat so they brought false allegations against him. Even so, the people who sat in council saw that Stephen was innocent. His face was like an angel. Even as he was being tried, he was a messenger of Jesus Christ. God calls us to go and be his witness. God promises to be faithful to us. God can shine his light through our lives, especially during the difficult times, if we remain faithful and trust God with our lives.

There is a warning here. When followers of Jesus Christ do great things amongst the people, they may feel persecution. People can feel threatened by the grace of God. During these times, it is easy to focus on some political or social issue, focus on the person, focus on anything that isn’t important. During his trial, Stephen teaches us to keep our focus on Jesus Christ and his grace. Even those who were against Stephen could see the face of God. One of those people standing there was Saul, who would later be known as Paul. Little did Stephen know that his faithfulness would later be helpful to Paul as he shared the faith with the world, fulfilling the promise God made to Abram.

Prayer:

Calling God, as you called Abram and Stephen to follow you, you have called us. May we trust in your faithfulness and in your strength. We give you our fears and our worries knowing you are the rock on which to build our lives. We trust you with the decisions we are

making. Give us wisdom to see your Spirit guiding us. Show us how to be a blessing to others today.

(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.