



Weekly Devotionals for February 19-27

Monday, February 19 Read Psalm 25:1-10

List some of the things the psalmist is asking of the Lord. How does the psalmist intend to respond himself? Are these things you would ask of God and what would your own responses (give some specific examples) be?

Tuesday, February 20 Read Genesis 9:8-17

The rainbow is to be a sign that the cleansing sacrifice of the Flood has done its work and will not be needed again. This prefigures the once-and-for-all atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross...which serves as a sign for us of God's continued graciousness. Reflect on what the cross means to you and the ways its symbolism comforts and inspires you.

Wednesday, February 21 Read 1 Peter 3:18-22

According to v.18, what was the purpose of Christ's mission? Who did He do it for? Water, literally in the case of Noah, and figuratively in baptism, reminds us of the need for sacrifice, change and re-birth (or, seen another way, death and resurrection) if we are to be brought to God. Note that "an appeal for a good conscience in v.21 literally means "a pure heart" (see Psalm 51:10). How do commitment and sacrifice do this?

Thursday, February 22 Read Mark 1:9-15

Here Jesus begins his ministry, taking over from John and fulfilling that prophet's pronouncements of the coming Messiah. It begins with confirmation from God plus a period of testing and strengthening. In what ways might our own faith walks include both confirmations (times you are sure of God's power and presence) and times of challenge and testing? Why might these two things be important in shaping us as disciples?

Friday, February 23 Read 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Notice that faithful discipleship is no promise of a pain-free or struggle-free existence! Quite the contrary. A real acceptance of the wondrous grace of God (not 'in vain' as in v.1) allows us to endure all challenges and not just with gritted teeth but with "purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love (6:1)." for facing these trials and how do you make use of them in your own life?

Saturday, February 24 Read Psalm 32

Look closely at vv.2-7. Why is confessing our sins and struggles and temptations before God so essential both in mending our relationship with God but also in improving our lives in general? Why are we often so quick to make excuses or avoid going before God honestly? As you walk through Lent, resolve to spend a little time each day in confession and talking with God in prayer about where you need his direction and change. How can vv.1-2 help you be honest before God in this process?

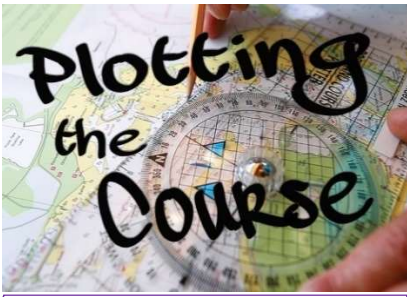
Sermon Notes

"True North"

February 18, 2024

Mark 1:9-15

1. Lent reminds us of the importance of being aware of the path we are on and where it is leading.
2. If we are to stay on the path, it is important every day for us to:
 - A. Focus: How will I embody Christ today?
 - B. Repent: What needs to change or stop if I am to do that?
 - C. Prioritize: Make a plan and bathe it in prayer!



Week #1: "True North"

Small Group Discussion Guide

Part I. Taking in Our Surroundings

- 1. Read Mark 1:9-15** Share: "Here Jesus begins his ministry, taking over from John and fulfilling that prophet's pronouncements of the coming Messiah. It begins with confirmation from God plus a period of testing and strengthening." Discuss the following:
 - What are some of the ways your own faith walk includes both confirmations (times you are sure of God's power and presence) and times of challenge and testing?
 - Why might these two things be important in shaping us as disciples?
 - Read Sermon Note #1. How are the things you just discussed a vital part of the renewal and discipline of the period of renewal and reflection?
- 2. Read 1 Peter 3:18-22** Discuss the following:
 - According to v.18, what was the purpose of Christ's mission? Who did He do it for? Water, literally in the case of Noah, and figuratively in baptism, reminds us of the need for sacrifice, change and re-birth (or, seen another way, death and resurrection) if we are to be brought to God.
 - Note that "an appeal for a good conscience in v.21 literally means "a pure heart" (see Psalm 51:10). How do commitment and sacrifice do this?

Part II: Plotting Our Course

- 1. Look at the three steps suggested for staying on the path in Sermon note #2. Discuss the following:**
 - What are the tools/practices that can help us focus on embodying Christ? How can being a part of a church fellowship help here as well?
 - Read Psalm 32. Why is confessing our sins and struggles and temptations before God so essential both in mending our relationship with God but also in improving our lives in general? Why are we often so quick to make excuses or avoid going before God honestly?
 - What new or renewed priorities has God laid on your heart this season? Why do you think that is?

LENT

Pray Fast Give

If you are currently practicing some or all of the Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and giving, use this space to reflect on what you are discovering on this journey.

Praying:

How are you structuring or adjusting your prayer life this Lent? Why?

Fasting:

Are you "giving up something for Lent" this year? If so, what? How do you understand the importance of sacrifice, or fasting, to your personal discipleship?

Giving:

Where can you be more generous this year? How can you inspire or encourage others and how would this possibly impact your faith?