



Devotions and Notes for the week of September 14-19

Monday, September 14 Read Psalm 107

This psalm of deliverance is, on the surface, a wonderful list of crises and God's active, loving redemption. But look closely at how this list is bracketed. Verse one makes a proclamation of God's "steadfast love," the remaining verses offer proofs but then look at Verse 43. According to it, why is it important to be sure of that steadfast love? _____

What does this psalm suggest to us as disciples? _____

Tuesday September 15 Read 1 Kings 19:1-15

This section immediately follows Elijah's spectacular defeat of the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18). Look closely at Elijah's complaints here. What specifically is he upset about here and what did he want- and expect- to happen after his triumph? _____

Notice how detached he seems to be from God.

What might this tell us about God's choice to come in the "sheer silence" and what might it suggest in our own discipleship? _____

Wednesday, September 16 Read Exodus 16:1-21

What does the story of manna (from the Hebrew *man hu*, lit. "What is it?) in the wilderness tell us about human nature? _____

What does it tell us about what God wants from us? _____

What does it suggest about our own relationship with God in times of trial and challenge? _____

Thursday, September 17 Read Genesis 45:1-15 & 50:20

The fallen world is full of sinful actions and evil- like the jealousy and hatred of Joseph's brothers- and they have very real and painful ramifications. The good news is that God can still use even evil inten-

Lesson #1: September 13, 2020

"Who Said Anything About Fair?"

Sermon Notes:

1. In our fallen world, sin will always cause pain and discord.

"For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh." -2 Corinthians 4:11

2. Yet God can and does use worldly circumstances to effect His larger purposes.

"God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God" -Genesis 45:7-8a

3. People of faith seek and apply God's will even in challenging times.

"If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own." - John 15:19

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tions for an ultimate good, the cross being the best example. Why is it important for us to recognize this truth without disregarding, or making light of, sinful actions? _____

What might this say about our own response to evil, both that which we commit and that we often experience? _____

Friday, September 18 Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12; 16-18

As you meditate on this passage, try rephrasing vv.10-11 in your own words. What does Paul mean here?

In all of this there is the reminder that everything we do is focused on larger, eternal purposes and earthly limitations shouldn't worry us over much, after all as v.7 says, our weakness serves to display "the all-surpassing power of God" in us. Where can we find comfort in our daily challenges in this passage?

Saturday, September 19 Read John 15:12-25

Sometimes we fail to take seriously Jesus' warning that we are called to live in a way that openly challenges and confronts this fallen and sinful world...and we should not expect the evil in the world to simply roll over. It is, as it always has been, a struggle. As scary as that is, read vv.12-17 again. How are we to face these challenges and where can we find strength and comfort? _____

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

If you use these devotions as a basis for a small group study, here are some suggested guidelines for framing your study and your discussion

Part 1: Discovering our wildernesses

1. Share with the group: A dictionary definition of "wilderness" is a place that is "an uncultivated, uninhabited and inhospitable region." In short a place that makes us feel overwhelmed, alone and helpless! Have the group share times and places where they have experienced wilderness— physically, emotionally and spiritually.
2. Read either Psalm 107 or 1 Kings 19:1-15 and discuss the questions from either Monday or Tuesday's devotions. Where is the wilderness in this passage and how does God respond?

Part 2: But Thar's Not Fair!

1. Read the sermon notes 1-3, one at a time, along with the scripture quoted with each. Discuss the following questions: How do (should?) we respond to the brokenness of the wilderness around us? Try to give as many specific examples as possible.
2. Read John 15:12-25 aloud. What is Jesus saying here about the fairness of the world and our challenge in living as Christian disciples? Is this consistent with your own Christian experience? Why or why not?

Part 3: Heading into the Wilderness

1. Go back and discuss any questions from the week's devotionals that may have struck a chord with anyone in the group.
2. Share thoughts on how we can help one another, as the Christian family, work through our wildernesses. Share prayer concerns and covenant with one another to lift these up this week.