

Friday, August 7

Reading: Genesis 32:24 “Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak”

Thought: The story of Jacob and his brother Esau is a fascinating one. At this point of the story, Jacob had been told by God to go back to his homeland, after spending 20 years hiding from his brother because he had stolen Esau’s inheritance. Jacob was so afraid that he sent several messengers ahead with large gifts for his brother. Then Jacob stayed behind, hoping that the gifts would placate Esau so that when he followed, his brother would accept him. It was when Jacob was alone that a man came and wrestled with him all night. In the morning, Jacob rejoined his family, and Esau ran to greet him and welcomed him. Of course, this is a lovely story of family and forgiveness, but I think we can find even more meaning than this. I think this is an example of spending a sleepless night struggling with a difficult decision that had to be made. Jacob was injured when he wrestled, but he limped on and followed the instruction God had given him. We are called to do the same. Have you ever had a sleepless night, struggling with a decision? Have you ever been afraid to follow God’s instruction?

Prayer: Gracious and loving God – thank you for the opportunity to serve you and in doing so receive the abundant life you have promised.

Saturday, August 8

Reading: Psalm 17:6 “I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me, hear my words. Wondrously show your steadfast love.”

Thought: What a lovely statement of faith this psalm starts with. Wouldn’t we all love to say with complete confidence, “I pray to you because I know you will answer.” Doubt is a human frailty we all experience at one time or another, so we don’t always have the confidence of the writer of this psalm. Yet, we can take guidance from it and work towards that perfect faith that this psalm illustrates. Knowing our weakness is the first step in addressing it.

What do you feel when you read this verse? Are you always confident God will answer you?

Prayer: O God – I confess my doubt and yet am confident in your steadfast love, I believe – help me in my disbelief

Sunday August 9

Reading: Isaiah 11:2 “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of God.

Thought: The prophet Isaiah is speaking of the character of the Messiah, of Jesus, whose character we are called to emulate. Wisdom is the application of knowledge, an understanding which goes deeper than the surface facts. As followers of Jesus, we are called to have a spirit of direction and guidance as well as strength of character. Knowing there is a problem and the possible solutions is not enough to solve that issue. We need to understand the reasons behind the situation. When we truly understand something, only then we can proceed with wisdom. Have you experienced trying to solve a problem without understanding it? What happened?

Prayer: Holy Spirit – I welcome your presence in my heart. Help me to understand your guidance to become more Christlike in every way.

Monday, August 10

Reading: Psalm 145:16 “You open your hand, satisfying the need of every living thing.”

Thought: I have written before about how I often experience the scriptures in a visual way. This verse gives me a vision of the hand of God, lightly cupped and turning over with all the good things tumbling down to earth. God causes rain to fall to nourish the crops, winter for perennials that need cold to thrive, jobs to provide a living, and the love, forgiveness, and grace that we need to be spiritually alive. How do you experience this verse? How do you experience the hand of God opening up?

Prayer: All-loving God – thank you for providing for not only my every need, but the needs of all things. Help me to recognize the outpouring of your never-ending love.

Tuesday, August 11

Reading: Romans 9:3 “For I could wish that myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own brothers and sisters, my own flesh and blood.”

Thought: This is the Apostle Paul expressing his grief and anguish that there were some Hebrews that had not accepted Jesus as the Messiah. What a wonderful example of forgiveness and humility. Paul does not judge any of those who had not come to Jesus. I could understand if Paul were angry at them. After all, they had been chosen to be God’s people. The Hebrews had thousands of years of history with God. They were the keepers of God’s law and worship and promise. Paul must have felt they should have been the ones to flock to Jesus. Yet, Paul expresses such heartache and compassion here. I can’t imagine anything worse than being cut off from Jesus, yet that is what Paul is willing to give up in order to bring others into God’s realm. Most of us have people we love around us that have no relationship with God. We cannot force them to believe and so we too share Paul’s situation. What do you feel when you look at friends and family who don’t have a relationship with Jesus? What would you do to bring them to Jesus?

Prayer: Jesus – give me compassion and love for those who have not accepted you as their saviour. Help me to help them find you in their heart.

Wednesday, August 12

Reading: Matthew 14:13 “Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.”

Thought: As usual, there is a lot of information packed into a single verse of scripture and so many things to think about. We could contemplate Jesus’ need to withdraw to a ‘deserted place.’ He had just found out John the Baptist had been executed by Herod. Was Jesus angry? Sad? Afraid for his own safety or the safety of his followers? We might ponder what kind of man would Jesus be to attract a huge crowd. Was it because Jesus was a good speaker and teacher or just because he worked miracles and people love a spectacle? And what about thinking of Jesus’ reaction to the crowd? Instead of retreating or demanding they leave, he responds with compassion – healing them and meeting their needs. What kinds of illness do you think Jesus healed? So many things to think about, and all of them worth the time and

effort to contemplate, even though we will not know the answers to our questions in this earthly life. What part of this scripture do you wonder about most? What lesson do you find here?

Prayer: Heavenly Father – thank you for your Word that calls us to contemplate and meditate on all the wonders of the life and actions of your Son.

Thursday, August 13

Reading: Matthew 14:20 And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full.”

Thought: Miracles are tough. Some people try to come up with all kinds of logical, rational, explanations of all the miracles found in the Bible, especially those of Jesus. The logical explanation of Jesus feeding 5000 people with the loaves and fishes is that many people had food with them and shared when the disciples began handing out food. Some people kind of skirt around the issue by saying that even if there is a logical explanation, it’s still a miracle since it happened at exactly the right time. Those people could have kept their extra food for themselves. They didn’t have to be inspired to share. Some get around it by saying the miracles aren’t that important or that they never happened at all and are included just to illustrate what Jesus could have done. Then again, you can believe in miracles and that those few loaves and fishes really did feed all those people. Do you believe in miracles? Have you experienced or seen one?

Prayer: God – thank you for the stories of your miracles and the questions they inspire.