

Devotions – June 28 – July 4, 2015
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Sunday, June 28, 2015

Text: Genesis 32:3-12

“I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies.” (Genesis 32:10, NRSV)

The world in which we live is filled with fear. We have fears of our own about certain things and about the future. Add to those fears the fears that are generated as the news continues to remind us of all the things that are wrong in this world and how we are most certainly going to be impacted unless something is done right now.

In this story, Jacob is returning home many years after having cheated his brother and left home in a hurry to avoid his brother’s anger. As he returns home his brother has come out to meet him with a company of men and Jacob does not know what the outcome will be. He is filled with anxiety and fear as he can imagine only the worst.

Yet he turns to God remembering all the blessings and grace that God has provided for him. He trusts that God’s “*steadfast love and faithfulness*” will be enough to get him through this time also.

Trusting in God’s faithfulness does not make the anxiety go away, yet it gives hope and courage to move forward into the unknown and fearful. May we take the experiences of God’s “*steadfast love and faithfulness*” in our lives trusting in God as we build more personal experiences of God’s power and grace.

Let us pray:

Gracious and loving God, as you have been faithful in protecting me and providing for me in the past, help me to see you and trust you in the complexity of life that lies before me. Amen



Monday, June 29, 2015

Text: Deuteronomy 7:7-11

“Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,” (Deuteronomy 7:9, NRSV)

Why has God chosen me to be who I am as a child of God? A much better question than asking, “What do I need to do so that God will choose me and love me?” For God makes God’s choices without regard to who we are, where we come from or what we have done.

Our reading from Deuteronomy reminds us that the chosen people of Israel were chosen because God loved them. Nothing that we do has anything to do with God’s choices. God has chosen us first, just like God chose Israel first, before they had anything to do with it.

Because God is faithful, that love comes first to us as God has promised just like God’s love came first to Israel because God had promised. Where this all seems to get mixed up is that our response to God is important as we live out God’s covenant relationship by keeping God’s commandments, loving and caring for one another and recognizing the abundance that God pours into our lives.

God’s faithfulness is the nature of God reflected in God’s relationship with us and God’s provision for us. We are faithful in the ways that we acknowledge God’s faithfulness first in our own lives and actions.

Let us pray:

*Faithful God, you are faithful in much, help us to be faithful in that which we have that you might be made known to others through us and our response to you.
Amen*



Tuesday, June 30, 2015

Text: Psalm 86

“But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” (Psalm 86:15, NRSV)

The Psalms often speak to us out of the fears and the struggles of the Hebrew people living life in the midst of the ordinary struggles that are day to day life. We can often relate to the issues and the struggles of the psalmist.

Sometimes we can look at their struggles and feel more comfortable in our own challenges of life. Once again in this psalm we hear about God’s steadfast love. Ever since childhood the thought of God’s steadfast love has brought me comfort. Not knowing fully what it meant, the thought of steadfast love left me with a sense of ongoing, never relenting, never waning or failing caring that would always be there for me in my time of need. In other words, “I knew that God had my back.”

In times of turmoil I am often likely to turn to the psalms just to be reminded of that fact. God's big story has always revealed that even when it appears to be totally out of control, God is already working on the solution. Faithfulness is God's nature and we are the beneficiaries.

Let us pray:

God of the present, you work with the past as you prepare me for the future. Keep me always focused on you and your abundant mercy. Help me to trust that your mercy is always enough and that I have nothing to fear from you. Amen.



Wednesday, July 1, 2015

Text: Psalm 138

"I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything." (Psalm 138:2, NRSV)

I find it amazing that I can have a personal relationship with God who desires to have a personal relationship with me. In the midst of that understanding while we are being "best buds", this is also the God of creation. This is the God that all of creation bows to and all power in the world comes from.

Yet it is the lowly (vs. 6) that God seeks out. I am most in tune with God when I experience trouble and difficulty. When I rely upon God and trust in God more than my own abilities and resources, then I am most closely connected to God.

God's faithfulness can be seen in my thanksgiving and reverence for what God has done and can do.

It is in making me less that God becomes more in my life and the lives of those around me.

Let us pray:

Gracious God, thank you for making your name known in my life and in the life of the world. Help me to glorify you in the actions of my life and the praise that I offer. Amen.



Thursday, July 2, 2015

Text: Zechariah 8:1-17

“Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts shall be called the holy mountain.” (Zechariah 8:3, NRSV)

God in God’s faithfulness is always optimistic about the human condition. While the human condition is sinful and it was that sinfulness that created all of the struggle and turmoil and loss of the exile in spite of the words of the prophets, here in Zechariah (and in so many other places in the Bible) God speaks to the future.

God speaks to restoration and healing. God speaks to building up rather than tearing down. God speaks to restoring relationships and connections. We have a great need for this kind of healing in our lives, in our connections with others.

God has just this sort of reconciliation in mind beginning with God’s return and God’s work being done among God’s people. We like to be the ones in charge, but when things begin to happen, notice how it is always God that moves first.

Yes, God is faithful and always begins the work that we get to be a part of.

Let us pray:

God of reconciliation, help us to identify and to name those things in our lives that need to be reconciled and healed. Help us to remember and to trust that you have already begun the work leaving us to enter into the power of your faithfulness and love. Amen.



Friday, July 3, 2015

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

“God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:9, NRSV)

It is in Christ that God’s grace and love and mercy are most clearly revealed. It is in this revelation that we are able to develop a relationship of trust and hope in God’s goodness and mercy. In and through this relationship is our own faith formation and growth. We have faith because God first had faith in us.

Our own personal sense of faith is the beginning of the relationship and the beginning of a lifelong quest to know God better. But as Paul reminds us in the greeting of his first letter to the Corinthians it is out of God’s faithfulness and God’s invitation that we enter into this relationship of faith in the first place.

Our own faith begins with God’s faithfulness to God’s promises to us. It is in these promises that we are strengthened along the way. Our faith is the result of God’s faithfulness and that is something that will never fail.

Let us pray:

Faithful God, thank you for the invitation to faith and the care and nurture that you provide for our faith each day. Open our hearts to your will and your work that we might grow in faith as we serve you in this world. Amen.



Saturday, July 4, 2015

Text: Romans 3:3-26

*“What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?”
(Romans 3:3, NRSV)*

Today we celebrate the anniversary of the declaration of independence and the birth of a nation. This weekend I will be celebrating with a number of other people significant anniversaries of congregations and predecessor congregations in the ministry I serve. Throughout those years of history both as a nation and as congregations there have been numbers of people that have impacted the lives of people and institutions for the better and for the worse.

We raise the question in the midst of these reflections then, “Does the failure or faithlessness of some nullify the faithfulness of God?” If God has faith in someone who fails in that process does that mean that God’s faithfulness is faulty? By no means.

We do not trust in the faithfulness of others, and we often trust too much in our own faith and faithfulness, for we as human beings are all sinners. We all fail God and God’s trust at some point in time.

But God and God’s promises remain faithful in spite of us. This week’s reflections would point to that time and again. All this means that our continuing trust belongs in God. Right down to the creation and growth of faith. May God bless you in your journey and bring you great joy.

Let us pray:

Faithful God, thank you for the gift of faith. Guide us and direct us to use that faith to glorify you and to help others live and grow in faith. May we be blessed in order that we might be a blessing to the world in your name. Amen.

