

THE DAILY WALK



Trinity Presbyterian Church
Berwyn, Pennsylvania

September 21 – October 24, 2009

September -- October, 2009

Dear Daily Walkers,

The Daily Walk is created as a guide for personal devotions. The organization is on a daily basis, though some make it a weekly practice. Each day lists the Scripture passage that is the focus for that day, and then reflections are shared. Some are personal; some are historical; all are intended to deepen our walk with God. These reflections are a mixture of new thoughts and wisdom “recycled” from previous years.

The passages follow the “Revised Common Lectionary” for the church year. Many different churches follow the lectionary as a way of guiding our reading to explore a variety of Scripture passages, rather than simply focus on old favorites. So the next few weeks meet Esther and read Job’s story; we complete the letter of James and explore the letter to the Hebrews; the gospel readings continue through the Gospel of Mark.

In Christ,

Jay Wilkins

P.S.

The Daily Walk is available on the Internet at www.trinityberwyn.com.

Look on the left side of the page, and click on The Daily Walk tab, and then click on the PDF for the edition you want. This does require you have the free Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer.

LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

September 21 – September 26, 2009

In what do you have faith? And does your answer to that question change depending upon the day of the week? Does our faith in God, so evident during Sunday morning worship services, remain strong throughout the Monday-to-Friday routine? The passages for this week ask questions and offer insights into the nature of faith.

MONDAY, September 21: Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

Purim is a Jewish holiday that is celebrated on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of either February or March. As part of the Jewish custom, the Book of Esther is read on the eve and morning of Purim as part of the services. The Book of Esther commemorates the courage of Queen Esther. Torn between keeping silent and safe, on the one hand, and speaking out and risking her life, on the other, Esther boldly and bravely intervened. She petitioned her husband, King Xerxes (or King Ahasuerus, who reigned in Persia from 486-465 BCE), to spare her people, the Jews. In making this request, Esther saved her people by keeping them from being annihilated by the sinister plans of Haman. How many of us have that much courage?

It is noteworthy that the Book of Esther does not mention God, and is therefore considered by some biblical scholars to be one of the most secular books of the Bible. And yet, faith can be seen as a motivating factor for Esther. Is it faith in God? faith in herself? faith in good prevailing over evil? Perhaps the lesson for us is that we need to be aware of situations in which we might be called upon to act boldly for truth and righteousness, for goodness and hope—to act out our Christian faith. We have the power to make a difference, in words and deeds, using the resources that are within our influence.

God, only sometimes do we call upon you by name. Yet, we know that you are involved at all times and in all aspects of our lives, even when we are not mindful of it, even when we have not called out your name. Help us to be good stewards of your presence in our daily tasks, in the routines of life. Amen.

TUESDAY, September 22: Psalm 124

It is possible that pilgrims returning to Jerusalem from years in captivity sang this psalm. These verses swell with emotion as the people recount all that God has done for them. If the Lord had not been on their side, then they would have been

swallowed up alive and swept away by the flood. They would have been captured in the fowler's snare. But, praise be to God, their help was in the Lord!

And this is the Lord who made heaven and earth. This is the Creator God! The God who is on our side continues to recreate and renew; God continues to sustain and strengthen us. Moreover, the Lord saves us from the things that threaten to bring us harm—the fowler's snare. Not only does God keep us from being ensnared, God destroys the snare. Its integrity is broken; its hold over us is no longer a threat.

Lord, who made heaven and earth, we give thanks that you are on our side. We praise you for your faithfulness and compassion. Break us free from anything that entraps us, so that we might escape into your loving embrace. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, September 23: James 5:13-20 (I)

In my Bible, these last verses of James are titled The Prayer of Faith. In faith we come before God in prayer. Sometimes we pray from the depths of our troubles, with heavy hearts. Other times we pray with light hearts, bursting with joy and songs of praise. Often we pray for healing for those whom we know are sick or injured. The author of James, possibly the brother of Jesus, reminds us that the Lord hears our prayers offered in faith. Our prayers, for whatever occasion, are powerful and effective. Let us be earnest, steadfast, and faithful in our prayers for one another.

Most loving and gracious God, thank you for hearing our prayers offered in faith. Amen.

THURSDAY, September 24: James 5:13-20 (II)

In his commentary on these verses, William Barclay noted an important characteristic of the Christian Church: “In the orthodox Jewish Synagogue, since the Fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, there has been no music, for, when they worship, they remember a tragedy; but in the Christian Church, from the beginning until now, there has been the music of songs of praise, for the Christian remembers an infinite love and enjoys a present glory.” (Barclay, p. 152)

Christians sing songs of praise! We celebrate the knowledge that the love and faithfulness of Jesus Christ enables us to enjoy an infinite love and a present glory. We know Christ has defeated death. Let us remind one another of this life-giving truth. There is no trouble or sickness that can separate us from the love of God. Nor do our sins permanently separate us from God. Just as a prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well, a prayer of confession faithfully offered will bring healing as well.

God of Healing, often it is easier for us to share our troubles caused by physical sickness than it is to share our spiritual and emotional distress caused by our sins. Remind us that you offer healing for all situations. Amen.

FRIDAY, September 25: Mark 9:38-41 (I)

What do you spend on water each year? For most of us in the suburban Philadelphia area, the cost and availability of water is not a huge concern. We pay little attention to our water bills. To give away a cup of water is a minor inconvenience. Perhaps Jesus is reminding his disciples (and us) that sometimes a simple kindness is the only thing required. We don't need to spend a huge amount of money on a lavish gift to show our love; we don't need to rub shoulders with the rich and powerful to be important. We do need to work in this world in the name of Christ, having faith in its power. Often the way we go about serving God will not look exactly like the methods of others. Be tolerant. Do not criticize their ways, for whoever is not against Christ is for him.

Teach us, Lord, to be more tolerant of our differences. Amen.

SATURDAY, September 26: Mark 9:42-50 (II)

Mark grabs our attention in these verses by using hyperbole. While we are meant to pay close attention to the message behind the hyperbole, we are not meant to take the admonitions in these verses literally. If we did, we would all be without limbs and eyesight, for we all fall prey to sins. Rather, we are to remove the things that prevent us from fully being in relationship with God. What obstacles prevent you from living out your faith? Are there bad habits and behaviors that may not be harming you physically, but are harming you spiritually? Stopping our sinful behavior may be as painful and difficult as severing a hand from our bodies. It takes great faith to change our lives. It is not easy, but it is worth it.

Help us, O God, to identify the things in our lives that cause us to sin. Give us the faith and strength to change them or remove them. Amen.

LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

September 28 – October 3, 2006

We live in a connected world and often face complicated problems for which there are no easy answers. Our readings this week assure us that the love of God is always present, even when we face times of great brokenness in our lives - when our relationships aren't working, when we are isolated and alone, or when we are suffering from illness or loss. Unlike human laws, God's love cannot be broken. It endures forever.

MONDAY, September 28: Job 1:1; 2:1-10

The book of Job is a “when bad things happen to good people” story about a man who lives a blameless life, and is deprived of wealth, posterity, and health. Despite these crises he keeps his faith in God. The book does not explain why we suffer. Nor does it “justify the ways of God” with human beings. Instead, it asks us to ponder the mystery of faith in the face of suffering. The book ends with Job drawn into a deeper communion with God.

Thank you, God, that “you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling.” Amen. [Psalm 116:8]

TUESDAY, September 29: Job 1:1; 2:1-10

Job's wife is deeply distressed by her husband's suffering. Sometimes we also observe bad things happening to people we care about. A farmer is faced with crop failure. The woman who runs the local coffee shop gets cancer. At those times in our lives together, we - like Job's wife - suffer alongside those who we care about. It sometimes can be difficult to accept that God is with us in our concern and love.

Lord, help me to see that my cup is half full, not half empty. Help me to trust that one day that cup will truly run over. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, September 30: Psalm 26

The psalm could easily have been uttered by someone who is suffering like Job. It is a plea for justice and a declaration of righteousness and innocence. “I have walked in my integrity” tells us the psalmist has followed the commandments of God wholeheartedly. Yet he is still harmed by wicked people, and he hopes that God will not allow the righteous to be swept away with evildoers. “My foot stands on level ground”

expresses his faith that the present steep, rough, and perilous path will become smooth. God will be with us through all the difficult rocky times!

Thank you, God, for the life we have in you through Christ, and for your sustaining Presence in the journey. Amen.

THURSDAY, October 1: Hebrews 1:1-4

The opening sentences are one of the most magnificent passages in the Bible. They answer some important questions and present some wonderful spiritual truths. Who is Jesus? What is his relationship to God? Jesus is the Son. He is “. . . the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being.” What beautiful imagery!

For beauty and goodness, God we give you thanks. Amen.

FRIDAY, October 2: Hebrews 2:5-12

When Jesus humbled himself by relinquishing his divine privileges, he became “. . . lower than the angels.” The writer quotes Psalm 8:4-6 which refers to humankind (son of man), not Jesus (Son of Man). William Barclay says, “. . . if we are to understand this passage correctly, we must understand one thing - *the whole reference of Psalm 8 is to man*. The psalm is a great lyric cry of the glory of man as God meant for him to be, little less than divine. But in fact, man beset by his weaknesses, is not what he was meant to be.” The writer to the Hebrews points out: into this situation came Jesus Christ. He died to recreate man until man became the creature he was originally created to be.

Lord, help us to live meaningful lives as your servants. Amen.

SATURDAY, October 3: Mark 10:2-16

The reading focuses on enduring relationships and the question of divorce. The Pharisees attempt to trap Jesus into taking sides. Jesus turns the question around, pointing to what God has created over and above the laws that govern human life. Faithful relationship must be taken seriously.

Jesus finds a teaching moment when his disciples try to prevent a group of children from coming to him. He blesses the children and tells his followers that the only way to enter the Kingdom is to come as a trusting child of our heavenly Father. Do you remember the church nursery art which greeted your offspring every Sunday showing Jesus with a smiling child?

Lord, help us discern your high aspirations for all your children. Amen.

LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

October 5 – October 10, 2006

“How easy it is for a poor man to depend of God! What else has he to depend on? And how hard it is for a rich man to depend on God! All his possessions call out to him: ‘Depend on us!’”
Rabbi Moshe Leib

MONDAY, October 5: Job 23: 1-9

Tragedy strikes and Job loses his children, his wealth, and his health. Why? This is Job’s question. He has been a truly good and religious man, doing all the “right” things. Is God unjust and unfair? Despite the injustice of his situation, Job cannot let go of the belief, rooted in everything that has shaped him, that God is a god of justice. Therefore, the notion of a trial with God where he would be vindicated remains in the realm of his imagination. Yet Job’s desire for a trial is blocked by the elusiveness of God. God is inexplicably absent. Is God most present when God is absent?

TUESDAY, October 6: Job 23:10-17

Job’s cry is more than a demand for a hearing; it is also a lament that when God is most needed, God seems most far away and most arbitrary. Job is filled with dread and despair. Suffering is a reality that defies human understanding. So what kind of faith is possible? Martin Buber says of Job, “Job’s faith in justice is not broken down. But he is no longer able to have a single faith in God and in justice... He believes now in justice in spite of believing in God, and he believes in God in spite of believing in justice. But he cannot forego his claim that they will again be united somewhere, sometime, although he has no idea in his mind how this will be achieved.” Life is a mystery that eludes easy answers. In the end, suffering challenges us to trust in a God who in ways beyond our knowing controls the ultimate destinies of humans and nations. In our post 9/11 world, it’s even richer food for thought and prayer.

WEDNESDAY, October 7: Psalm 22:1-15

The lament was the preferred way of petitionary prayer in Israel. It is a daring, assertive way to address God in a time of need and ask (or demand) that God respond decisively to alleviate the need. In Psalm 22, God’s absence and echoes of Job’s outrage are expressed. Like the assigned Job passage, the psalm passage stops abruptly without any resolution of the voiced trouble. The image is of a physiological dismantling of the person; the body has been completely broken and culminates in the “dust of death.”

There is no doubt of God's capacity to save. All that is required is a motivation that will move the God of life against the state of deathliness. Have mercy, O God, have mercy.

THURSDAY, October 8: Hebrews 4: 12-13

John Calvin, the "father" of Presbyterianism begins his Institutes with two premises: 1) without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God and 2) without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self. What is the knowledge of self and God proclaimed here in Hebrews? No part of the human life is beyond the knowing gaze of God and all are vulnerable to God "to whom we must render an account." As both promise and warning, what is told is that when God speaks, the word is incisive, revealing what is hidden and giving the experience of being exposed before God. All are naked and laid bare to God, who holds all responsible for their actions. The sovereign God of Job and of the Psalmist is also the sovereign God proclaimed in Hebrews. Have mercy, O God, have mercy.

FRIDAY, October 9: Hebrews 4:14-16

At last, some good news! No doubt, we are ready for the word of comfort and reassurance that we get here. God has wounded us to restore us. As the hymn says, "Jesus knows our every weakness." Jesus can bridge that absence of God, and we can approach God's throne, not as a symbol of a distance from us but as one of God's power to aid us. We can do so with boldness. Like Job and like the Psalmist we can call on the memory of God's graciousness. We will find abundant grace and mercy to help in the current time of need.

SATURDAY, October 10: Mark 10:17-31

This passage pivots around the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" This question neglects the fact that an inheritance is a gift. It is not earned but is given through the generosity of the benefactor. Jesus is teaching that one does not earn eternal life by doing good deeds. One does good deeds because one has already inherited eternal life. Job and the Psalmist and the rich ruler believed that God rewards those who are good religious people and follow the law. Jesus taught that God rewards those who are faithful even when persecuted and that salvation is a gift. "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." (Mk. 10:15)

Vulnerable, naked, needy, dependent....Have mercy, O God, have mercy!!

LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

October 12 – October 17, 2009

This Sunday is the Children's Sabbath. *"On this Children's Sabbath, we remember that Jesus had a very special vision for the place of children within the realm of God. ... Where is true greatness? Perhaps in the ability to recognize the worth of those we might be tempted to ignore."* The lectionary passages for this week seem to remind us that we are children of God. To experience God's world here on earth, we must submit to His plan.

MONDAY, October 12: Job 38:1-7 (34-41)

I confess that I have loved the story of Job for some time now. There are qualities within the story that seem to naturally resonate with me. This week, when I reviewed the research material that we use to assist us in our preparation of this devotional guide, something I read in The Abingdon Preaching Annual seemed particularly apt in my life. It noted that it was very appropriate for the Lord to answer Job out of the whirlwind, *"... because often it is in the storms of life where we do meet God."*

I remember back to when I was sick with cancer. I spent many long nights by myself in the silent house. I remember the awesomeness of the stillness that only occurs between 3:00 and 5:00 in the morning. It felt like the entire world was asleep and I was all alone. And during this time, I felt closer to God than I ever had before.

A strange thing happened as I gradually got better. I spent fewer and fewer nights awake late. And I began to notice that I missed those late hours, alone with God. It was a strange paradox to be joyful about my return to health, but to feel melancholy about losing my special time with God. It seems difficult now to understand how I could be thankful for being sick at one time with cancer. But I am. It was a unique and special time, not easily duplicated.

Dear God, thank you for coming to us during life's adversities, for making something special out of something that might initially shock and upset us. We marvel that as we become closer to You, the awesome mystery becomes more evident.

TUESDAY, October 13: Job 38:1-7 (34-41)

There are so many things I love about the story of Job. The first thirty-seven chapters of the book consist of a detailed accounting of all of the sufferings to which Job is subjected, and the spirited debate between Job and his contemporaries as they attempt to understand and make sense of it all. Through the first 37 chapters, Job becomes quite adamant about demanding an explanation from God. What moxie! It reminds me of the

story of Abraham, when he bargains with God to save Sodom. (Genesis 18:22-33) Now we have Job, demanding that God acknowledge his integrity and reinstate his reputation.

Then in Chapter 38, God answers him out of the whirlwind. Just this fact is amazing to me – that a man could demand an audience with God, and God would grant it.

Then something astounding happens. God doesn't answer Job's demands so much as he fires a slew of ironic questions right back at him. All of these (seemingly rhetorical) questions only highlight how little Job is equipped to spar with God. And so it is with us.

While some might find this a bit disconcerting, I have always found this quite comforting. To quote from The Abingdon Preaching Annual, *“the longer we ponder [God's answer], the more we understand that there is a liberation that comes to us that can free us from trying to understand everything.”* While this is not a license to quit thinking, it does free us to accept things that we cannot understand.

WEDNESDAY, October 14: Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35

Similar to Job 38:4-7, this psalm uses comparable language in verses 5-13 as it marvels at God's creation. God's handiwork truly is amazing, and as we learned in Job, beyond our ability to duplicate or fully comprehend. But that does not prevent us from drinking in the beauty of it all.

Thank you God, for such a marvelous gift as this earth. We pray that you might direct and lead us in faithful paths as we strive to be good stewards of your gift.

THURSDAY, October 15: Hebrews 5:1-10

The passage from Paul's letter to the Hebrews lists the qualities necessary for a priest, or for someone that will minister to other men. The Barclay Commentary contains a wonderful analysis of these verses and priestly qualities, one that I cannot improve upon, so I include selected sections herein:

“The priest must be a man; he must be completely involved in the human situation; ... In connection with this he used a wonderful work – the word metriopathein. ... It is a wonderful word. It means the ability to bear with people without getting irritated and annoyed; it means the ability not to lose one's temper with people when they are foolish and when they will not learn and when they do the same thing over and over again and when they seem to be senselessly blind. It describes the attitude to others which does not issue in anger at the fault and which does not condone the fault, but which to the end of the day spends itself in a gentle yet powerful sympathy, which by its very patience moulds a man back on to the right way. It is the attitude which never

regards a man as a lost fool, but often sees in him a contrary child of God, who somehow must be gently led back to the right way."

Dear God, when you appoint me to minister to members of your flock, please instill in me this quality of metriopathein, that I might be worthy of your election.

FRIDAY, October 16: Mark 10:35-45

This story from Mark follows James and John as they make their play for power. From our perspective, it is easy to be somewhat bemused at the sheer ignorance of James and John. Do they not know that Jesus is on the home stretch of his journey towards crucifixion? How can they have failed to understand that Jesus' vision for God's realm on earth requires a complete reversal of conventional societal values? True greatness is realized when we serve others. Yet if I were in their shoes, would I have "gotten it?" If I am honest with myself, I doubt that I would have.

This has me wondering. If it is counterintuitive to first think about service to others, then the human condition must be a tendency towards the accumulation of power. Is this human condition a natural predilection, or is it some sort of learned behavior? And if it is a learned behavior, can the cycle be broken? If it is possible to break the cycle, perhaps someday we will see God's kingdom come, His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Dear God, lead me to paths of service; let me be an instrument of your kingdom.

SATURDAY, October 17: Mark 10:35-45

I listened to an interesting interview on the radio this week. The guest was an American Jew that had served in the Israeli military during the first intifadah. His position in the military was a prison guard, and he talked about his lengthy conversations with the Palestinian prisoners. He laughed about his naiveté, and how he had believed that if the Palestinians had followed a plan of non-violent protest, similar to Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr., that they would have won their conflict with the Israeli authorities in relatively short order. He truly believed that the Israeli government would have had no choice but to negotiate with the Palestinians. When he posed this question to his Palestinian prisoners, their response was incredulous. "Do you think that we could just passively sit and submit to a Jew?" Even if non-violent protest could have been a successful strategy, Muslim and Arab culture would not allow a male to subjugate himself to a Jew. The interviewee went on to talk about his gradual understanding and appreciation for the cultural differences between Israelis and Palestinians, and that any

solution for peace in the Middle East will have to respect those differences and somehow accommodate them within a plan for peace.

In light of the passage from Mark, I find this interview even more intriguing. I believe that Christians have a unique gift to offer the world. Adopting an attitude of service first can be a powerful example for others.



OCTOBER 24, 2009
FALL SWING AND FLING
"A HOMERUN FOR MISSIONS"
OUTREACH FUNDRAISER - To Benefit:

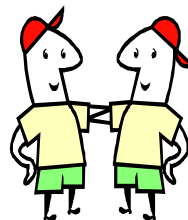
* MISSION HONDURAS where we are in partnership
with the churches at Puerto Grande and Moropocay
and
* LOCAL CHARITIES

A "team effort" is needed to make our mission giving possible! Be a member of the team by supporting this event - attend one or both activities. If you can't attend, monetary donations are greatly appreciated!

"SWING"



Place: Golf at Kimberton Golf Club
Time: 10:00 am first tee-off time
Price: \$80.00



"FLING"

Time: 6:00 pm
At: Surrey Services for Seniors
Price: \$30.00 per person
\$15.00 per person for golfers
What: Fellowship, Good Food, Door Prizes,
*Silent Auction, Service/Live Auction



*Please donate a service, gift certificates, etc. for the auctions;
talk to Gary Horn - 610-647-2424. Tickets will go on sale in Sept.

LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

October 19 – October 24, 2009

MONDAY, October 19: Job 42:1-6, 10-17

Why do good people suffer? Is suffering the Will of God? Does God cause suffering in our lives so that we might learn something and grow spiritually or does God merely allow suffering? Job understands that “no purpose of [God’s] can be thwarted” and *yet* reason, experience and even common sense teach us that evil happens, accidents happen, “bad stuff happens” (to paraphrase that bumper sticker), that must surely be contrary to God’s good will. Another child is killed by a stray bullet in Philadelphia. Is this God’s will or the foolish, dangerous, evil act of the gunman? The only moral answer is that the responsibility lies with the shooter. God allows evil. God is with us in the midst of evil. God’s good purposes ultimately prevail—if not in this world, then in the next.

And yet...and yet we know that some difficulties we face are not borne of evil, but are rather gifts from God, for we do learn, we do grow, we do become wise. Perhaps Job experienced it all—random bad luck, deliberate evil, and godly discipline. And in it all God was present for Job—God works his purposes out in and through every bad thing.

TUESDAY, October 20: Job 42:1-6, 10-17

Recently I read a marvelous book called Don’t Leave Me This Way about a young stroke victim. She found comfort and encouragement in the belief that her accident was part of God’s over all plan. When I was young my best friend had muscular dystrophy and she too was encouraged by the belief that God had designed her life to be exactly as it was—illness and all. Although I would never want to interpret the experiences of others or discourage anyone by implying that his or her illness was essentially random, I find these kinds of beliefs difficult.

Do we worship a God who visits serious injury or illness upon his beloved children? Or do we live in a natural world where God allows illness and injury to take their course? The book of Job asks these kinds of questions, and if you spend long enough in Christ’s church you know that these kinds of questions are the ones people ask most often. God informs Job that a human being can never understand what God is up to—that God’s purposes and plans are often beyond human reasoning. It makes sense then to “live the questions.” Maybe we don’t understand everything that happens to us. Perhaps we can’t know what is godly discipline and what is random bad luck, what is a “learning opportunity,” and what is a tragedy to be endured. But what we do know as

Christians is this: “*nothing* can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” God knows the origin of our difficulty and he also knows how best to save us. Perhaps our question should not be “why?” but “how?” How shall we respond to this challenge? How can we partner with God to bring about the best possible result?

WEDNESDAY, October 21: Psalm 34:1-8 (10-22)

The Psalmist is so filled with joy because he knows that God has heard his prayer and answered in a very positive way. Often these kinds of answers to prayers take a long time. We pray for a certain outcome, and eventually, after many ups and downs, our prayer is answered. God’s timing is His own, and sometimes the prayer is answered after a long and circuitous route. Two, three or twenty years later our lives have worked out well. Do we then, like the Psalmist, remember God? Do we take the time to acknowledge His providence, or do we move on, assuming time or chance alone worked in our favor? Sometimes redemption takes a lifetime, but for God’s beloved children who trust in him, it is redemption indeed!

THURSDAY, October 22: Hebrews 7:23-28

In this passage, we are presented with an image of Jesus as our eternal advocate—ever available and ready to cry out and plead with God on our behalf. We have always been told that “God is unchanging.” And He *is* unchanging in that his essential character does not change, because He is wholly perfect, but when God became flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ He experienced a big change. Before the incarnation, God did not know intimately what it was like to be a human being. By allowing Himself to be subordinated in this way, He experienced what it truly felt like to be hungry, thirsty, angry, frustrated and limited. This is why Jesus can and does intercede on our behalf before the Holy God—because Jesus is the essence of God that became flesh, the essence of God that can empathize with our human weaknesses.

FRIDAY, October 23: Hebrews 7:23-28

Even though Jesus can empathize with our weaknesses and our sins, he nevertheless is pure and without sin. Unlike the priests, Jesus as our intercessor does not need to make sacrifices for his own sins, because he is without sin. Likewise, he does not need to make any additional sacrifice for our sins, because he was himself the perfect and final sacrifice. This atonement is a holy mystery that has been debated long and hard throughout the centuries by the church. The Bible is not clear on exactly **how** this “works.” But, as Christians, we rejoice with gratitude that it *does* work! Not only do we

have a “great high priest” who loves us and understands us, this same gentle priest is willing and able to cleanse us of our sins before we stand before the Holy God.

SATURDAY, October 24: Mark 10:46-52

Jesus asks blind Bartimaeus, “What do you want me to do for you?” This is the question that he asks all of his followers. Jesus knows that people do not always want to let go of “what ails them.” Often it is easier to remain as we are. CS Lewis talks about how each of us is like a spiritual house. We ask God to intervene in our lives and we expect Him to do a little “redecorating.” Maybe God will build a new sunroom, or remodel the kitchen. What really happens when we ask God to intervene, however, is like looking out the window and seeing a wrecking ball heading our way! God is preparing to knock our house down and start over, building a house for Himself to live in. Let us take seriously Jesus’ question, and be prepared for the time, effort, and even the pain that our answer might mean.

SUNDAY, October 25: Mark 10:46-52

If we had our way, God would respond immediately to our requests. Sometimes we feel like we might be nagging if we ask for the same thing over and over again. But for whatever reason, Scripture teaches us that sometimes the “squeaky wheel does get the grease!” Bartimaeus will not be quiet about his needs and his desire for Jesus to help him. The determined widow keeps knocking on the Judge’s door. Hannah begged for a baby over and over. This shows us that God wants us to keep asking, knocking, begging, questioning, praying. I wonder why this is? Perhaps God keeps us in relationship with him this way. Perhaps he knows that in the continual asking we prepare ourselves for the answer when it does come. Who knows? But it is wonderful to know that God is not going to get tired of us!