

# *The Daily Walk*



Trinity Presbyterian Church  
Berwyn, Pennsylvania

July 28 – Sept. 6, 2008

August, 2008

Dear Daily Walkers,

Summertime, and the living is . . .

We complete that sentence usually based on our life experiences. Living can always be faithful, and this daily devotional guide is one resource the members and friends of Trinity provide for our faith community.

The reflections are “recycled” from previous years – good thoughts should never be forgotten. Enjoy the walk, faithfully.

Yours in Christ,

Jay Wilkins

Special Music in August Worship . . . 10 AM

- August 3: Divine Dance Ensemble & Helen Hartigan, Offertory Soloist
- August 10: Roy Roseberry & the MainLiners Chorus
- August 17: Chancel Choir Anthem ‘Sing Praise to God’
- August 24: Trinity’s Praise Band & Divine Dance Ensemble
- August 31: Helen Hartigan, Soloist

## LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

July 28 - August 4, 2008

*What gets you angry with God? God is with us in all the ups and downs in life. We can face the future with hope and confidence. Do we want an awesome encounter with God? Do we dare to wrestle with God to receive a blessing? Do we dare to challenge Christ to care for us when we are lonely and in need? The psalms are good resources for our walk with God.*

### **Monday, July 28: Genesis 32: 22 —31**

Jacob, the trickster, is about to return home to face the one he deceived. Imagine the emotions that fill his heart! Can you sense the struggle in his decision and actions? Even though Jacob's own actions led to his exile from home, God has continued to be present with him. Life has been good to him, but Jacob begins to think about home with the birth of his eleventh son, Joseph. He has paid his debts to Laban, and Jacob comes up with a scheme where he will be paid with many animals. Laban's sons become jealous. Jacob's wives, Rachel and Leah, are treated like outsiders. God speaks to Jacob in a dream — it is time to return home.

*Lord, grant us peace that we may face family with the strength of faith.*

### **Tuesday, July 29: Genesis 32: 22 —31**

Jacob turns to God, and sends a peace offering ahead of him to his brother Esau. He sends his family and livestock across the river, but a man wrestles with Jacob until daybreak. Who is this stranger in the night? His brother? God? His own guilt feelings? Jacob gets no answer, but is himself given a new identity: "Israel" — one who strives with God. The sun rises, a new day dawns, and a new life begins. Jacob/Israel now walks with a limp as a reminder of having wrestled with God. Surely, now he can face his brother.

*Lord, grant us healing to transform our anger into acceptance.*

### **Wednesday, July 30: Psalm 17**

Where do you go when you have been wrongly accused? Who do you talk to? In the Scriptures, many of the psalms are laments, crying out to God, getting angry with God, demanding to be heard and helped. The cry from the heart is rooted in a profound trust in God, that God will be present to lead us through such experiences. Where do we go to get angry with God? Ancient Israel had the temple; today, some go to a church, to

the shore, to the mountains. Go wherever you can be honest, because God is there with you.

*Lord, grant us the faith to be angry and honest with you.*

**Thursday, July 31: Matthew 14: 13—21**

Jesus tried but he could not get off to a place by himself. He was wrestling with himself after he learned of John the Baptizer's death. He needs time for himself, but the crowds need him with them. The disciples wrestle with Jesus on behalf of the crowd, and the miracle of the loaves and fishes happens. We are given no clues as to how it happens, but only that more food was left over than was started with. Such is often the case when we wrestle with God to have compassion 4 on the hungry and the sick.

*Lord, grant us the courage to wrestle on behalf of the hungry and the sick*

**Friday, August 1: Romans 9: 1 —5**

Paul's letter to the Romans contains some of the best known passages in the New Testament. Yet, one of the least well-known passages is chapters 9, 10, and 11 in Romans. Most preachers skip right over it. Why? They are Paul's struggle to understand how Gentiles are included in God's plan, while Israel seems to be left out. Many Christians in the United States assume that the big question is: how will the Jews be saved? For Paul, the big question is: how can the non-Jews be saved?

*Lord, thanks be to you that your saving power is not limited by our ideas.*

**Saturday, August 2: Romans 9 1 -5**

Paul's loyalty to his faith has been questioned. He spends so much time in his mission to the non-Jews, that some question his loyalty to his own people. His experience convinces him that God's grace extends beyond his own faith community to those who have not been a part of God's covenant with Abraham. Now that he has written that nothing can separate us from the love of God, he wonders how the Jews and Gentiles are both included in God's love.

*Lord, open our hearts to embrace the wideness of your mercy.*

## LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

August 4 — 9, 2008

*How do we recognize God's saving action when it comes to us? In the midst of the storms of life and the chaos of the world around us, saving acts of God seem easy to recognize — they bring peace and wholeness. But, when life is more complex, and all we have are two bad choices, then how do we recognize God's power to make us whole? The Scripture lessons invite us to step out in faith.*

### **Monday, August 4: Genesis 37: 1- 18**

The story of Joseph is the longest story in Genesis. The story has many different levels of meaning and could make a good soap opera on TV. At one level, the story is simply an explanation of how God's chosen people ended up in Egypt. Many are familiar with the coat made for Joseph, but the Bible says nothing about "a coat of many colors"; that image came from an old translation error. The coat is significant though. The father loved this son more than the others, and had a coat made "with long sleeves." The long sleeves of a coat have a clear symbolic meaning: Joseph cannot do manual labor in the fields wearing this coat. Joseph has been set above the ordinary work his brothers do.

*How do we start family feuds today?*

### **Tuesday, August 5: Genesis 37: 1- 18**

The feud among the brothers could be calmed, but Joseph does not help.. He has a dream in which all bow down to him! What's worse, he even tells the dream to his brothers! The plot thickens; the brothers plan his capture, sell him into slavery, and trick their father into thinking that Joseph had died from an animal attack. Where is God in all this? Getting Joseph to Egypt with the traders who bought him, so that when his brothers come looking for land years later, Joseph is in a position to help them.

*Can God use the dirtiest of family secrets to bring good to God's people?*

### **Wednesday, August 6: Psalm 105**

Praise be to God for making the best of bad situations. The psalm gives thanks to God for all God has done to bring God's people to a land of joy where worship is possible. The story of Joseph and his being sold into slavery to Egypt forms the centerpiece of the psalm's thanksgiving.

*Write a prayer of thanks to God. What events in your life would be the center around which your story with God turns?*

**Thursday, August 7: Matthew 14: 22—33**

Chaos. How do you experience it in your life? The biblical writers often used the power of a storm at sea at night to represent the most fearsome powers of chaos -- uncontrollable power not visible until it overwhelms you. The disciples were there literally and figuratively. Jesus comes to them, walking on the water. No doubt about who really has the power in this story! Jesus is able to overcome the power of chaos and darkness; yet, the disciples do not recognize him.

*Where do you recognize the power of Christ working in your life?*

**Friday, August 8: Matthew 14: 22—33**

“It’s me,” Jesus says to the frightened disciples. “Do not be afraid.” That is the message Christ brings to the church of every age, facing many different frightening circumstances. Even when we are feeling overwhelmed and burned out, Jesus comes to us to strengthen us and keep us moving on with God. We also know something of Peter’s spontaneous request: “Call me to come out there with you, Lord.” The spirit is willing, but the faith is weak. Now, Jesus has to rescue a soaking wet Peter, flailing about in the water.

*Are you still in the boat? Stepped out in faith? Maybe having to swim?*

**Saturday, August 9: Romans 10: 5—15**

The apostle Paul continues to sort out how both Jews and Gentiles are being saved by God. His position is pretty simple — if you believe Jesus is Lord, you will be saved. Our challenge is to share this message of hope with everyone, not simply sit contented in our own sanctuaries feeling good about ourselves for saying the correct words. Distinctions between Jews and Gentiles are irrelevant. We are called to step out in faith to share our experience of the risen Christ and the hope that he brings to our lives. Even if we are not sure about the footing or what we have to say, if we take that risk and step out, the blessing will be for each of us:

*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! Amen.*

**LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE**  
**August 11—16, 2008**

*Through the readings for the past several weeks, we have faced challenges and difficulties of living in harmony as the faithful family of God. As individuals and as communities, we have a lot to learn about healthy relationships with those who are different from us. Through God's grace, we can find ways to break through barriers to listen and talk and walk together.*

**Monday, August 11:           Genesis 45: 1 – 15**

Famine and drought has struck the land of Israel, so ten of Jacob's sons go to Egypt and ask for help. The government official happens to be their brother Joseph. Why don't they recognize him? He is probably the last person on earth they would have expected to meet in such a setting — their brother an Egyptian speaking, comfortable living, government leader?! Yet, Joseph recognizes them and plays a few tricks to see if his brothers really have changed over the years.

*"How wonderful, how beautiful when brothers and sisters live in unity." Ps. 133*

**Tuesday, August 12:       Genesis 45:1—15**

Joseph asks the bureaucrats to leave, and then he speaks in Hebrew, his native tongue, revealing his identity. He weeps deeply and loudly. The tears wash the soul. The brothers are so shocked that they cannot speak. Joseph tells them his story, and gives them a sign of forgiveness and reconciliation — he kisses them. Reconciliation is powerful and painful, awkward and awesome. Reconciliation happens as Joseph claims that what happened to him was God's plan. "It was not you who sent me here, but God." Discerning God's will is a challenge, but seeing God's presence in the worst circumstances empowers us to reach out to others.

*"How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters live in unity." Ps. 133*

**Wednesday, August 13:   Matthew 15:21 —28**

Jesus finds himself on the dividing line between Jewish and Gentile territory. He is met by a woman who lives across that line, and who lives in great pain for the life of her daughter. She is persistent, even though Jesus ignores her. She identifies herself with Jesus' own people by calling him Son of David. Jesus is free to reject her because she is not Jewish, but she persists. Through her persistence and willingness to risk reaching out to Jesus, she breaks down both religious and social barriers.

*"How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters live in unity. ' Ps. 133*

**Thursday, August 14: Matthew 15: 21 – 28**

Jesus' silence does not silence the woman. Instead of being offended when Jesus compares her to dogs, the woman reframes the question by arguing that both dogs/non-Jews and children/Jews eat food from the same table. Jesus is moved to celebrate the woman's deep faith in a God who is Lord of the entire world. The woman has challenged prejudice and assumptions about God, and her faith is affirmed. What a model of faithfulness!

*"How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters live in unity." Ps. 133*

**Friday, August 15: Romans 11: 1 – 24**

Paul seeks to discern God's will for both Jews and Gentiles based on his experiences and faith. How can he believe that God's grace has been extended to non-Jews, and, at the same time, believe that God has not abandoned the Jews? Paul is distressed by the resistance to the good news of Christ, yet it too must be a part of God's will. What is God up to? God is using the rejection of Jesus as an opening for the Gentiles. God is reaching across the barriers Jesus experienced, and is welcoming all who accept God's grace.

*"How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters live in unity." Ps. 133*

**Saturday, August 16: Romans 11: 25—36**

So many times we assume God's math is a "zero sum" game. If some get added in, then others must be subtracted. Paul struggled with that question too, and realized God does not make that assumption. God's original people have had their hearts hardened so that the non-Jews could be welcomed by God; when the time comes, all Israel will be saved. They are enemies of the gospel, but still beloved and elected by God. This is a "mystery" even for Paul!

*"O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"*

## LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

August 18 — 23, 2008

*Who are you? Who am I? This week's readings remind us that who we are personally is connected to who we are as a community of faith. Who I am individually is discovered as I relate my gifts, skills, and interests to those with whom I share life in the community God has called me to live. The more we are able to enjoy the gifts God has given, the more we will enjoy life with each other.*

**Monday, August 18: Exodus 1: 8— 2:10**

“But the midwives feared God.”

A new political regime comes to power, and what does it fear most? Losing power of the cheap labor force. The Hebrews were welcomed into Egypt because of Joseph's position of power, but now their status changes because they lose their connection to power. How often do God's people even today assume we are connected to positions of power, and feel threatened when politics changes our economic status? The midwives act out of their deep faith in God, and deceive the new political regime. Civil disobedience fueled by faith!

**Tuesday, August 19: Exodus 1: 8— 2:10**

“She named him Moses because she drew him out of the water.”

Pharaoh had sought to turn the Egyptian symbol of life, the river Nile, into a symbol of death. Yet, for the future liberator of God's people, the river becomes an avenue of new life and hope. The women still create strategies around the power of the political regime. Miriam, Moses' sister, gets her mother hired as nurse for Moses. Pharaoh's fear blinds him to strategies that keep God's story with the Hebrews alive. God turns the power of death into opportunities for new life.

**Wednesday, August 20: Psalm 124**

“Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.”

The closing verse of Psalm 124 became a standard call to worship in the Reformed branch of the church that includes Presbyterians. If we believe that, in life and in - death, we belong to God, then all of life is lived in response to God. Wherever we go, whatever we do, nothing can separate us from the presence of God. The Lord was with Joseph in the pit and in Egypt, with his brothers when they came seeking help, with the Hebrew people 400 years later when a change in the political regime threatened their economic status. Wherever we are, we are a child of God.

**Thursday, August 21: Matthew 16: 13 —20**

“Who do others say that I am? Who do you say that I am?”

The answers of biblical scholars, poets, artists, and friends ultimately do not matter. The bottom line is declaring for ourselves who is this Jesus of Nazareth. Only once in the gospels does Jesus ask that question, and then his teachings take on a rather different focus. The disciples are confronted with crucifixion. Are we willing to follow Jesus in his journey? Will we join up with a community looking to the cross as its destiny?

**Friday, August 22: Romans 12: 1 — 8**

“...by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice. . .“

We talk of making sacrifices for our children, and for our country. How often do we understand our very selves to be given up to God? To give ourselves, not simply parts and pieces, time and money, to give our whole selves requires us to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. Our whole way of thinking, of relating to our culture and other people, have to be transformed to offer ourselves to God. The challenge of claiming Jesus as our Christ leads to the call to renew our minds, our ways of thinking and understanding, so that our minds lead the way of discipleship.

**Saturday, August 23: Romans 12: 1 —8**

“. . . we, who are many, are one body in Christ,  
and individually we are members one of another.”

The question often comes up: how can we be united in Christ when we have so many differences? Unity as the body of Christ is a gift from God. The faithful question is: how well do we care for the unity we are given? Paul’s words are statements of life in Christ, not a wish for the future. In Christ, we are connected as parts of a body are connected. When my head hurts, my whole life hurts. When one member of Christ’s body hurts, the rest of us suffer also. We each have functions to perform. If we say we do not understand others or have no need of them, then we need to renew our connection to the body of Christ.

## LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

August 25 — August 30, 2008

*How then shall we live? is the question for the week. When we open ourselves to respond to Jesus' call to follow, we must be fully aware of the challenges involved. The good news is that we do not take this risk alone. This week's passages invite us into engagement with the community of Christ.*

### **Monday, August 25:           Matthew 16:21 – 28**

Peter's confession has been made as he proclaimed Christ the Messiah, son of the living God in Matthew 16:16. The foundation has been poured for the church as Christ proclaimed Peter the rock on which the church will be built (Matthew 16:18). Jesus' announcement of impending suffering and death must have been troubling to all the disciples. The idea of a crucified Messiah was difficult to comprehend. But the followers of Jesus had to begin coming to terms with why he came.

Peter had trouble understanding what Christ must do to accomplish his goal. Jesus instructed Peter to "get behind me, Satan". In other words, do not be an obstacle or stumbling block to God's plan.

Peter's resistance was a human reaction. He did not want to move from the security of Christ's presence in the community of the faith to an unknown and uncertain future. How often do we, like Peter, resist God's call in an attempt to do it our way?

### **Tuesday, August 26:           Matthew 16:21 – 28**

The journey to which Jesus calls us is a lifelong learning experience. We are called to set aside human ideas of saving ourselves and laying aside our egos (losing ourselves) for the sake of Christ. In so doing, we reap rewards beyond our wildest dreams. Jesus challenges us to carry his cross and follow him. The cross represents the center and true support of the community of faith—the church. It is the sign of our identity as followers of Jesus. Jesus is calling us to get involved, to take risks if necessary, individually and congregationally, to carry the cross and follow him. What a challenge! May God grant us the faith and courage to meet the challenges as we daily walk the journey with him.

### **Wednesday, August 27:       Exodus 3:1 – 15**

This is a story of Moses' call as God appears to him in the form of a burning bush. This got Moses' attention! It also provided him with a life-changing experience as he suddenly knows God in a direct and personal way.

God has asked Moses to speak to the elders of Israel to give his people freedom and then to lead them into that promised land of freedom. Moses' response to God's call is both an act of faith and the foundation of a new community.

How often do we, like Moses, in vs. 11, think or say "I am a nobody," feeling unqualified or resistant to a task. God breaks down our resistance by promising to be there right with us. God turns our feelings of being a nobody into being God's somebody.

**Thursday, August 28: Psalm 105**

This Psalm has been called a historical psalm. It is believed by some scholars to have been inspired under the national crisis that ensued when the leadership of Israel was taken captive to Babylon. It encourages them that God will come to their rescue as he did when Moses led them out of Egypt.

Did you find yourself reading the whole psalm? It offers an overview of the journey of God's covenant people from Abraham to Jacob, Isaac, Joseph and Moses and Aaron. It connects to the Exodus reading as the people praised God with thanksgiving for coming to their rescue.

It can remind us of the wonderful things God has done and is doing to provide and protect us. Praise the Lord!

**Friday, August 29: Romans 12:9 – 21**

Paul presents a long list of what life should be like in God's service. He offers a series of guidelines for living a new life in Christ. Verses 9-12 detail ways to promote personal holiness. We are to love with a sincere love that hates evil, to cling to that which is good. We are to show respect to one another. We are to be zealous and enthusiastic about our faith. Fatigue often comes to believers who faithfully toil and serve God, but that fatigue is not to rob believers of the excitement of their faith. We are called to be joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer. O Lord, may it be so.

**Saturday, August 30: Romans 12:9 – 21**

In verses 13-21, we read about holiness in relationships. Paul gives us a lesson in Christian conduct as he spells out how we are to relate to others. We are to share with God's people in need and practice hospitality. We are to avoid bitterness. We are to feel another's joy and pain. We are to maintain a harmonious atmosphere within the church. Divisions are to be avoided and harmony promoted. Do what is good. Live in peace with everyone. Avoid revenge; justice belongs to God. As we live in community as God's people, let us ever strive to lift high the cross so that together we may journey together in partnership with Christ and with one another.

**LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE**  
**September 1—6, 2008**

*This week's readings talk about the primacy of love in community life. In the context of today's society with so many laws and with lawyers just looking for loopholes, we may lack a full understanding of a law of love. We have been called to a life of doing more than just what is legal. We risk and love as though loving really mattered, sharing ourselves in service to others. In all these passages we gain a sense of the "now and not yet" of our present reality. Now we are challenged to go and do likewise.*

**Monday, September 1: Romans 13:8 – 14**

It is intriguing that Paul speaks about the primacy of love in Chapter 13 of Romans together with his strongest statements about the politics of the day. Paul's demands that the Christian community obey political rulers and comply with taxation have attracted contemporary criticism. The situation of the Christian community in Rome reflected in this text is a precarious one. Years earlier, Emperor Claudius had the Jews expelled from Rome and they were now slowly returning. Many Christians were also practicing Jews, and their sudden departure left the Roman church in tatters. The church survived the temporary exodus. Now the problem was the-reintegration of the returning Christian-Jews. There was great dissension between returnees and the Gentile Christian community that stayed. How would they be able to work and live together in community?

A key to understanding this passage is one important word in the text: *kairos* ("time" in verse 11). *Kairos* means "God's time," as opposed to *chronos* or "our time" of past, present, and future. God's time is not only different in duration, but also different in nature, when compared to human time. In Romans 13:11 we read, "The time has come ... the moment when we will be saved is closer now than it was when we first believed." Paul had a sense of the immediacy of God's time of liberation and of Jesus' return, together with the establishment of God's reign.

**Tuesday, September 2: Romans 13:8 – 14**

Paul was concerned about the heart of the community. He thought that love should bind them together in view of Jesus' return. Burdens like taxation and obedience to authority, mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, were not only necessary evils but also temporary, earthly ones. The urgency of the hour, the imminence of God's time, the knowledge of Jesus' promised return — these factors pressed Paul to address some of the issues that the whole community was facing so that they could be ready to welcome Jesus into their midst as a united community.

One example of such an issue is the complaint that Gentile Christians had very relaxed ethical behavior. Before their conversion; these believers used to participate in public festivals associated with pagan deities and demonstrated considerable license in sexual decorum. Making provision for the flesh is to feed human self-centeredness. It also meant relating without love or intimacy in the pursuit of self-gratification, and at the expense of another. It is forgetting that others, as well as ourselves, are images of God and that we are more than “natural” beings. The fingerprints of God the creator are upon each of us.

For Paul, with Jesus in sight, everything else is unimportant. He wants the community to be found blameless in the eyes of God. He appeals to their own baptism for a second time when he asks the community to don the “armor of light,” as it was an established custom for the newly baptized, some claim for the whole assembled community, to wear a white garment for a period immediately after baptism. Baptism is the great equalizer. All in this community proclaim God’s reign, dressed in the garments, the actions, of Christ

### **Wednesday, September 3: Exodus 12: 1 – 14**

Every time the Jewish people celebrate their pain, pilgrimage, and freedom during the Passover, they do not simply recall the memory of a distant past, but they remember a *kairos* — God’s time of liberation. God’s time allows them to relive and partake of this epic of God and the people. Whether they are in Palestine, in Rome, or in Auschwitz, *kairos* is a time for decision when God calls Israel to march out of bondage into promise, hope, and freedom.

The passage provides instructions for keeping the Passover, yet it presents a difficult problem: it seems to celebrate the activity of the Lord as bringer of death. This difficult problem is to be balanced by the deeper insight that the Lord is one who may be trusted, for the Lord defends those who seek shelter. In the end, the people stand liberated not just from Pharaoh, but from Egypt’s gods as well. The people are liberated *from* all false loyalties and allegiance, *to* an allegiance to the Lord alone.

### **Thursday, September 4: Psalm 149**

This is one of the concluding psalms of the Psalter. The psalm is God’s call for the people to enact and to embody God’s reign. This psalm assigns to the people, rather than to a monarchy, the job of establishing God’s reign in all the earth. The rule of the Lord brings God’s people to an understanding that the social order must reflect the moral integrity of the world’s ultimate King. Injustice must be denied; the oppressed must be delivered. And all of this is done in a spirit of celebration.

**Friday, September 5: Matthew 18:15 – 20**

This passage, like the Romans text, deals with issues of community living. Matthew's story was written initially for a small community, living in a hostile environment, that took its corporate life very seriously. Jesus describes a fair way to deal with conflict, respecting the personal integrity of all involved in the resolution process. Situations of alienation are to be taken very seriously. Conflicts between members cannot be simply glossed over or treated as unimportant. Nothing is gained by overlooking the injury, by not talking about it in hopes that it will soon go away. Forgiveness never happens by default. It occurs in the risky encounter between the alienated parties.

**Saturday, September 6: Matthew 18:15 – 20**

Jesus is teaching his disciples, and us, how important are the bonds of love that ought to knit the community together, and reminds us to forgive one another, again and again. The Christian community has a stake in brokenness and reconciliation—not only in the declaration of pardon every week in worship, but in the actual relationships among its members. The church is under the same mandate of forgiveness as the alienated parties and therefore joins in the search for a resolution. The trust demonstrated among members of Christ's family is an important expression of the trust that characterizes the kingdom of heaven