

The Daily Walk



Trinity Presbyterian Church
Berwyn, Pennsylvania

May 4 – May 31, 2009

Music & Worship Notes Coming Up



- May 3 . . . "Thy Will Be Done" by the Chancel Choir
Donut Sunday for the children
- May 10 . . . Chapel Choir sings "God Bless Families"
"The Gift of Love" by the Chancel Choir
- May 17 . . . Trinity's Praise Band will lead the hymns
Chancel Choir's anthem: "We Are A Church"
- May 24 . . . "And the Father Will Dance" introit by the choir
Anthem by the Divine Dance Ensemble
- May 31 . . . Chancel Choir Anthem: "Spirit of God"
Celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper



ADULT
EDUCATION

9:00 A.M. Sunday mornings in the Parlor

Beginning May 3 The Shack . . . join the conversation
(copies of the book are available in the church office)



TUESDAY MORNING GROUP

"Peter and Paul"

40 Daily Readings for the Purposeful Presbyterian

9:30 A.M. in the Church Parlor

May, 2009

Dear Daily Walkers,

Walk in the Spirit . . . what a great way to think of the month of May. A time to walk in the Spirit of the Risen Christ, a time to walk in the power of the Spirit who swept over the waters of creation, to walk with the Spirit who empowers our language to communicate with people across cultural divisions.

We will follow some of the key stories of the Spirit moving through the early church, of the Spirit of love at work in the midst of church conflicts, of the Spirit of Christ promised to be with us to teach and advise. We conclude this series with Pentecost Sunday celebrating the birth of the multi-cultural mission of the church.

I invite you to join me for the walk as we reflect on the Spirit spreading the good news of Jesus Christ in the ancient world, and today.

In Christ,

Jay Wilkins

THURSDAY, May 7: 1 John 4:7-21

This chapter deals with the central theme of John – love. Not that we love God and Christ, but that God loves us. The all-inclusive love we are accorded unites us and all people in the world, and demands that we share this love with others. As we share our love with and for others, we fulfill the requirements of our citizenship in the community of Christians.

FRIDAY, May 8: John 15:1-8(I)

This metaphor is familiar as Jesus becomes the vine and we the branches. As we bear fruit (spread the word to others) we honor the vine, and continue to reach out into the world. When we do not, we may wither and be disposed of, as would happen in real life to crops that do not produce as expected.

SATURDAY, May 9: John 15:1-8(II)

If we abide in God (through Jesus), and his word abides in us, anything we ask will be done. The punch line comes in verse 8 – God is glorified when we abide in him and his word abides in us, because we carry that word to everybody in our sphere of influence. We bear witness by becoming his disciples.

LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE
May 11 – 16, 2009

This week our hearts are lifted by the God who makes all things new. We walk through a portion of the farewell discourses of Jesus recorded in John's gospel. We are reminded of Peter's encounter in Acts with the Roman centurion, Cornelius. We learn from Psalms that God is not only Creator but keeps recreating, and we can look forward to a new song each day. The epistle of John reinforces Jesus' commandment to love one another.

MONDAY, May 11: John 15: 9-17

The farewell discourses of Jesus (Chapters 14-16) are styled as something of a reminder of information already shared with the disciples. On the way to Gethsemane Jesus, in the depths of his own sorrow and suffering, is doing his best to comfort the bewildered disciples. Jesus refers to them as "friends." He contrasts this description of their relationship with a former image he had used with them of "servant and master" (13:16). The reason the relationship has changed and deepened or become more familiar (a new song), is that Jesus has shared everything that he knows with them. The operative metaphor for the whole of this section (15:1-17) is that of the vine and the branches and the discussion of bearing fruit. The disciples are the branches, connected to or abiding in the central vine, Jesus. The fruit that the disciples (and we) are called to bear, love, is demonstrated in the foot washing by Jesus (13:5).

Loving God, you have shown us what your love is; help us to show it in our lives. Amen.

TUESDAY, May 12: John 15: 9-17

We might ask why this passage brings us back to the night before Jesus' arrest, when the church year is now at the point in the story after the resurrection. This whole discourse is a word of encouragement to the community about carrying on the fellowship of Jesus and work of the faithful that continues. Jesus is present with us, trusting us to work together in responding creatively and fruitfully to God's love.

Open us O God, to the power of your love. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, May 13: Acts 10: 44-48

We find Peter in Caesarea in the home of the Roman centurion, Cornelius. Peter, already challenged by God to think beyond his preconceptions (10:10 -16), grasps the radical notion that God's action will truly be no respecter of religious or cultural barriers. If any have received the Spirit, then they are already members of the emerging church

and should be baptized. In the world Jesus has ushered in, all are invited to lend their music to the new song, both Gentiles and Jews.

God, thank you for my brothers and sisters in Christ. May our love for one another reflect your love for all people. Amen.

THURSDAY, May 14: Psalm 98

All creation is called to join a new song, celebrating God's presence and love in all the earth, "for he has done marvelous things!" God's faithfulness and steadfast love are themselves the song and the reason for the singing. The importance of this message is seen in the numerous other times the image of "a new song" appears in scripture: Ps. 33.3; Ps. 40.3, Ps. 96.1, Ps. 149.1, Rev. 5:9.

Lord, help us to care for one another in harmony. Amen.

FRIDAY, May 15: 1 John 5: 1-6

1 John is concerned with many of the themes of the gospel of John. In this passage, the focus is on the command to love. For the author of 1 John (as well as for the author of the gospel of John), Jesus' command to love cannot be understood apart from the relationship between God and Jesus and between Jesus and believers. Love for others comes from loving God and following God's commands.

Lord, may my actions reflect your grace, so the world will glorify you. Amen.

SATURDAY, May 16: 1 John 5: 1-6

The old Presbyterian blue-cover "Worshipbook" includes on page 70 the order for a marriage service, with a paragraph attuned to the wisdom of 1 John. In the marriage service, the minister says: "Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love. Just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete. This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you." 1 John 5 tells us that God's commandments are not burdensome. What seems difficult becomes easy when love is present.

O God, help us to experience your love so that we may respond in love to you, Amen.

LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE
May 18 – 23, 2009

The festival of the Ascension is a problem in Scripture and the church. The church struggled to present a reality that goes beyond all “normal” explanations. The presenting problem is, on the one hand, the disposal of the body of Jesus: what happened to Jesus after Easter? That is a small agenda. On the other hand, the continuation of the church when Jesus is no longer present is a big issue. That story is that this fearful, waiting community, which is anxious and bewildered, has no power of its own. Yet, power is given that causes this fragile little community to have energy, courage, imagination, and resources way beyond its size.

MONDAY, May 18: Acts 1: 1 – 11

The disciples ask Jesus if this is the time when he is going to “restore the kingdom to Israel.” In his ministry, Jesus spoke often of ‘the kingdom of heaven.’ He taught in parables and metaphors about that kingdom: The poor in spirit will inherit it; it’s harder for a rich man to enter it than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle; it is like a mustard seed, or yeast; it is a treasure. From this distance, we can see clearly that Jesus was not talking about restoring an earthly kingdom in Israel. Jesus answers the question the disciples ask: “it is not for you to know.” And then he brings them back to the real focus of his ministry: to bring people into the kingdom of heaven. The disciples will receive power, but not the kind of power that goes with having an earthly kingdom. The Holy Spirit will empower them to be Jesus’ witnesses on earth.

TUESDAY, May 19: Acts 1: 1 – 11

The story of Jesus’ ascension into heaven “challenges our modern mindset.” Our questions about what exactly happened at this moment should not lessen our certainty about the meaning for Jesus’ followers: now they were to continue Jesus’ mission on earth. For Jesus had said to them, “You will receive power then the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

WEDNESDAY, May 20: Psalm 47

The festival of Ascension is not about the physical ascent of a body (the body of Jesus) into heaven. It is, rather, a worship celebration where Jesus “ascends to the throne,” that is, is dramatically elevated to a position of sovereign authority. In enacting this ritual of enthronement, the church’s worship draws heavily on the liturgy of ancient

Israel, whereby the Lord was elevated and enthroned as a powerful sovereign. Our psalm reflects such a worship experience. The liturgy of the Jerusalem Temple dares to imagine that its worship is an act concerning all nations and peoples. This inclusive horizon is advanced by reference to the Lord as “Most High” (v. 2). The title is not an Israelite name for God, but is a generic name for the great god, a name to which all peoples could subscribe. The hymn holds together the claims of universal sovereignty with the historical experience of the Israelite community.

THURSDAY, May 21: Psalm 47

The first characterization of enthronement in this psalm is a splendid liturgical act. “God has gone up”! The language portrays an act of coronation or enthronement whereby the candidate (like the winner of the Miss America contest) ceremoniously, magnificently, and flamboyantly ascends the throne and dramatically claims power and receives obeisance. The kingship of Yahweh is enacted and implemented liturgically, as is every political ascent to power. When we say of Jesus in the creed, “He ascended into heaven,” this is the language of ritual enthronement and coronation. What is claimed substantively, politically, and theologically is first asserted dramatically and liturgically.

FRIDAY, May 22: Psalm 47

This psalm invites us to understand the festival of Ascension anew. The festival is not about getting the body of Jesus off the earth, and it is therefore not marginal and incidental to the life of the church. The festival is a dramatic moment whereby the presence of Jesus in the church is converted into a large, cosmic rule. Rooted in liturgical rhetoric, this claim for God (and subsequently for Jesus) envisions important political spin-offs. All kings are indeed under God’s feet. God promises a rule of mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and caring. The new enthronement changes the climate of the earth and the modes of power now permitted in the affairs of princes and kings. The kingship of God transforms all other powers.

Saturday, May 23:

The church has no special language of its own to explain mystery. We must rely on our ancient worship traditions, as in the Psalms, which break out beyond rational explanation into wonder, awe, amazement, and gratitude. Worship is the arena in which the new power given the church by God is expressed. Worship leads to glad witness, asserting that the world is now open to a new kingdom and way of living. The story lets us see the mystery in glimpses and hints, but not more. God’s new rule is beyond our logic. We see its effect in a transformed community we call church.

No one present is excluded from this display of God's grace. Everyone is included at Pentecost. The tongues of fire rest upon "each" of the disciples, and a moment later the crowd comes surging forward because "each one" has heard the disciples speaking in his or her native tongue. In order that no one may miss the inclusiveness of the moment, the list of place names that begins in verse 9 traces a wide sweep through the world of the Roman Empire where God's people lived. Pentecost is not simply an inner mystical experience; it is an outpouring of God's energy that touches every life present.

WEDNESDAY, May 27: Psalm 104

The psalm speaks about God's "spirit" or "breath" as the creative energy that enlivens the whole universe. In the psalmist's view it is the breath of God that continues to sustain all life. If God were to stop breathing through us, we would cease to exist. It is this spirit of God - God's breath - that renews the face of the earth each day.

THURSDAY, May 28: Romans 8

The apostle Paul emphasizes that it is the presence of the Spirit within us that kindles our relationship with God. God's Spirit causes us to know that we are God's children and empowers us to share in the work and mission of Christ. We are assured that if we share in Christ's suffering on account of the gospel, we will also share in Christ's glory.

FRIDAY, May 29: John 15: 26 – John 16: 15

This passage recounts Jesus' promise to the disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit. The disciples are assured that they will experience in their lives what Jesus experienced in his - the Holy Spirit sent by God to counsel, comfort, teach, and empower. Not only that, Jesus tells the disciples that after he is gone, with the help of God's Spirit, they will, accomplish even greater things than he did.

SATURDAY, May 30

Not everyone responds in a positive way to the gift and fire of new life. Some made fun of what happened, and, in their unwillingness to believe the freshness of God's initiatives, reacted with stale old words as they confused Spirit-induced joy with alcohol-induced inebriation. Perhaps it was the very extravagant expression of the Spirit's presence that drove them to conclude: "This cannot be what it seems to be!" Yet what it seemed to be is precisely what it was. God's Spirit unleashed! New life— sudden, unearned, irresistible new life!

A PENTECOST PRAYER

Let us pray for the needs of the church, the world and all peoples, saying, Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

For this congregation of God's people with all its diversities in its common mission in Christ's name.

Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

For the whole church of Jesus Christ, born at Pentecost, and for all those who offer their lives in Christ's service.

Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

For the healing of this fragile planet in all its many beauties, that our children may know of your good gift of creation for generations to come.

Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

For the leaders and people of this and every nation, that your wisdom, justice and peace might prevail for the good of all.

Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

For all who suffer through poverty, injustice and imprisonment to forces beyond their control.

Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

For those who are the most vulnerable of your creatures, especially for children caught up in war, abuse and neglect, that your Spirit might overshadow them with your comfort and peace.

Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

For the sick, the sorrowful, the lonely, the dying; especially for those who have no hands to guide or comfort them.

Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

O Lord, our Teacher, further these our prayers in accord with your purpose for the salvation of the world. Open our eyes to those in need as we live out these prayers, that our hands might be your hands reaching out to reshape the world in ways that can better hold your redemptive healing and justice for all peoples. This we pray through Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to your great glory. Amen.