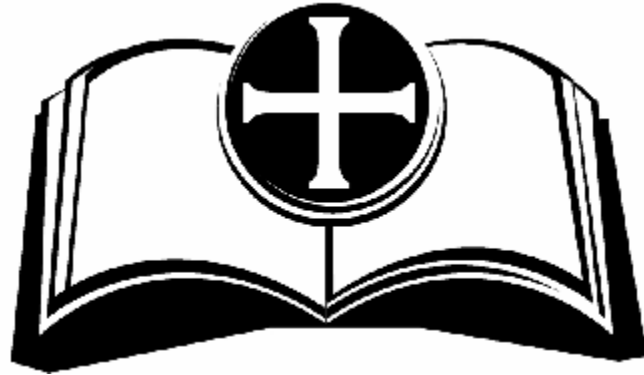


THE DAILY WALK



Trinity Presbyterian Church
Berwyn, Pennsylvania

September 8 – October 4, 2008

September, 2008

Dear Daily Walkers,

September . . . fall colors . . . football games . . . baseball playoff fever
presidential politics . . . what is that gets your heart beating and blood pumping?

As we follow the lectionary Scripture readings for the next few weeks, many people of faith will find their hearts beating to the rhythm of God's foundational story – the exodus. Different understandings of that event which created God's people are possible. But, no one can deny its importance even for Christians. Were you there when a path to a new future was provided? Are you waiting for that future now? Come, join the walk.

Yours in Christ,

Jay Wilkins

LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE
September 8 -- 13, 2008

An attitude of faith? Freedom within obedience? Law tempered by mercy? Lord God, lead us to be strong in faith, facing complex issues, and not simply wishy-washy and flip-floppy.

Monday, September 8: Exodus 14: 19 – 31

The Bible keeps returning to the fundamental saving event of the exodus. In that miraculous liberation, Israel receives its identity and its clearest disclosure of God. We read of the massive power of God, and the decisive defeat of Pharaoh and his armies. We hear of the complete commitment of God to Israel, and of Israel's fearful doubt. As the story is here, it is a story leaning "toward faith." It culminates with Israel's faith not only in God, but also in the leadership of Moses.

God, grant us the grace to be amazed and convicted by this story. May it become ours.

Tuesday, September 9: Exodus 14: 19 – 31

The crossing of the sea is Israel's rite of passage by which the people became a nation. Behind lay Egypt and bondage, ahead lay the wilderness and freedom. Israel entered the channel, which the Lord had carved by the strong east wind as a group of refugees, terrified and in panic. The people emerged on the other shore in awe and in an attitude of faith in the Lord for this great miracle of salvation.

The salvation of Israel has nothing to do with the people's strength or cleverness, for if left to their own devices, they would never have emerged from slavery. The salvation of Israel was nothing other than the work of God, the same God whose revelations to Moses had been characterized by a concern for the oppressed and by a passion to bring to them justice and mercy. The walls of water that hold the sea at bay are symbols of the Lord's grace, which protects and shelters the people.

Lord, surround us today by your walls of grace that we too may become new people.

Wednesday, September 10: Psalm 114

The present depends on what is remembered. Without memory, the present becomes an opening for distorted perception and careless conduct. Psalm 114 is an act of powerful remembering that leads to present-tense confidence and ends in an awed warning. In four short phrases, Israel recites its whole memory of life with God, from the slavery of Egypt to the well-being of the Promised Land.

Memory begins for Israel in the exodus, in God's rescue of the slaves from the empire. Israel knows full well that life has begun in a liberating miracle. God brought

Israel to a new home where the slaves had never been, to Judah and to Israel. In that new place of well-being, Israel could speak its own language, the language of covenant faithfulness. Life as God's people has its beginning in slavery and ending in well-being. The memory invites Israel to be astonished and grateful.

God of past and future, refresh our memory that our lives may truly celebrate the well-being we have with you this day and every day.

Thursday, September 11: Matthew 18: 21 – 35

The Bible repeatedly tells us that we ought to forgive those who have injured us. We know that. It is ingrained in our minds from the Lord's Prayer. Churches are full of people who know they should forgive, who intellectually recognize that there is some positive value in letting go of cherished hurts, but who find it almost impossible to do so.

Being cheated on by a spouse or double-crossed by a business partner are experiences that may lead to shame and rage, leaving the injured party feeling defective, defeated, and never quite good enough. To be told that one ought to forgive and let go of the pain simply does not effect a change; in fact, it may aggravate the situation by heaping a load of guilt onto an already enraged and shamed person.

God of grace, give me a break from all the oughts and the shoulds and the guilt trips.

Friday, September 12: Matthew 18: 21 – 35

What happens to the first servant? There is a remarkable gap in the parable. On hearing of being released from debt, the servant shows no appropriate response: no rejoicing, no gratitude, no celebrating with wife and children who are spared prison, no reflection about the meaning of freedom. We hear only that on the way out he refuses the pleas of a colleague. The "gap" in the parable has to be taken seriously. The first servant clearly has not "discovered" forgiveness. We already see something of the problem in his plea to the king. He imagines he is dealing with the king on the basis of justice. What he receives but never grasps is the king's mercy.

Forgiveness has to do with something very different from distributive justice. The first servant still thinks of indebtedness/forgiveness as a power game. He has not come to view himself in a new light as a truly "gifted" person, the recipient of mercy rather than justice. He is not able, therefore, to see himself in the same situation as the second servant, and is not able to show mercy as mercy has been shown.

Gracious God, help us to give up the power game of innocent against guilty, and welcome us into your fellowship of forgiven sinners.

Saturday, September 13: Romans 14: 1 -- 12

Quarrels regarding religious practice plague every generation, maybe every congregation. The issues themselves could have existed in many early congregations, especially in those that had both Jews and Gentiles as members. The quarrels have to do with diet and with special days, although the specifics are unclear. Some believe that their faith allows them to eat anything, while others reject eating meat sacrificed to pagan idols and eat only vegetables. Some observe “holy days,” while others regard all days the same

How can fights be resolved without destroying the fabric of the faith community? Paul does not attempt to decide the specific issues of food laws or feast days. He does not prescribe an “orthopraxis” by which believers may be evaluated. Instead, he makes several important theological observations and trusts that they will lead toward reconciliation. In other words, the health of the believing community takes precedence over “right” belief or “right” behavior.

God of grace, strengthen us to welcome the weak in faith and to live in ways that present no stumbling block to faith in Christ.

LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE
September 15 – 20, 2008

What a God we remember! Food is given in the wilderness, given where there are no visible sources of life, given in the face of restless protest, given wondrously, saving from both hunger and despair. Persons are valued not because of their economic value, but because God loves and engages them. That which initially appears to be an outrageous injustice is portrayed as the greatest justice of all—justice motivated by mercy and grace.

Monday, September 15: Exodus 16: 2 – 15

Grumble, grumble, grumble. Then, what is it? What is it? People have not changed much have we? The appearance of the divine bread is described, and the puzzled Israelites' question, "What is it?" not only hints at the origin of the name (*m-an hû'*, manna), but gives to Moses the opportunity to provide a theological interpretation of this wondrous miracle: "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat"

What a God who feeds us, and we understand it not! Thanks, God, for all we have.

Tuesday, September 16: Exodus 16: 2 – 15

Many Christians over the years have connected the sending of the manna and the Lord's Supper. There are many parallels. In both cases, the people are in need of God's grace. In both cases, the beneficiaries of the divine grace do not immediately see the full significance of the food that is before them. In both cases, the food is present as a result of God's intervention in human life. And in both cases, the food is symbolic: while it feeds a present hunger, it also fills a deeper need which transcends present appetites.

Lord, we prefer grumbling and disobedience to praise. Discipline us, gracefully.

Wednesday, September 17: Psalm 105: 1 – 6, 37 – 45

The departure from slavery and the arrival in the land of well-being, foundational events in the life of Israel, are cause for great joy and celebration. The arrival is an indication of trust in the God who keeps promises. The story of Israel's travel is a move from death to life.

The tradition is candid and does not make apologies for Israel taking over the land that belonged to others. We are reminded that Israel's entry into the land cannot avoid conflict, violence, and displacement. Maybe we can respect the "innocence" of this memory since it is the story of former. Here in this psalm, the journey of faith innocently comes to happy fulfillment. God can be trusted!

Liberating God, keep us humble, down to earth, faithful trustees for your land.

Thursday, September 18: Matthew 20: 1 – 16

There is no more cherished word than “grace.” Simply put, it describes the mercy of God demonstrated in countless ways to undeserving people. It is not surprising that polls show “Amazing Grace” to be by far the favorite hymn of American church members. Because of its popularity, the notion of grace often loses its cutting edge. It gets acculturated, divorced from the character of a righteous God, resulting in simplistic permissiveness. When that happens, nothing jolts and jars the good feelings quite like a reading of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. In this story, the radical and offensive nature of grace is depicted, always leaving the reader with the questions, Was the owner really fair? Don’t the laborers who worked all day have a legitimate gripe?

Lord of work and rest, cool our heated hearts when we feel others get more than we do.

Friday, September 19: Matthew 20: 1 – 16

Imagine what would happen if the world worked this way! What if the “equal pay for equal work” principle were not followed? People would sleep late and come to work in the late afternoon if they knew they would get paid for the whole day! The owner’s action upsets the whole social order.

God’s grace does not rest on the merit system. But because it doesn’t, we tend to grumble. We wonder if grace does not undermine the whole reason for being good, for observing standards, for keeping rules, for living justly. We second guess a God who equalizes the pay like this. We could support the owner’s generosity if the groups of workers that came after noon had merely been delayed, if the truck that brought them to the fields had broken down. But the owner’s actions are not the sign of a little generosity to an unfortunate few. They call for a totally different way of viewing God.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a greedy person like me.

Saturday, September 20: Philippians 1: 21 – 30

A friend of mine was put in prison for protesting injustice in this country. Should I feel embarrassed by claiming him as my friend, or empowered to share the gospel? Paul knew that, in the eyes of many, prison meant failure and “real Christians” would not be humiliated. Many are shocked today at Christians being put in prison for practicing their faith, in this country as well as in other countries. Paul knew that being put in prison meant that the message that Jesus Christ is Lord was being heard. Wherever we live, living our life in a manner worthy of the gospel may lead to conflict with social and political systems that have different loyalties.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares, grace will lead us home.

LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

September 22 – 27, 2008

The mercy of God can not be frustrated, no matter how hard the heart or how evil the intentions. The mercy of God is offered to all, revealing the inclusive nature of God's grace, but also how different is the kingdom of heaven from the kingdoms of this world. The "irresistible grace" of God was one of the essential beliefs of Presbyterians for centuries. Dare we trust God in this century to overcome whoever we think is so terrible?

Monday, September 22: Exodus 17: 1 – 7

How can we not feel some sympathy for the people? The harshness of the Sinai wilderness is legendary, and even modern travelers through the region have noted a sense of isolation there. If one were not provided with a basic necessity such as water, one's attitude would surely deteriorate with the onslaught of heat and thirst, no matter how intense the euphoria over newly gained freedom. Even liberated slaves cannot live on emotion alone! The grumbling of the people is condemned because it comes after the miracle of the quail and manna. Haven't these people witnessed the merciful presence of God in the miracle of the heavenly food?

How long, O Lord, how long before we "get it"? Get our attention, God!

Tuesday, September 23: Exodus 17: 1 – 7

Poor Moses! Caught between his fellow travelers and the harshness of the environment. Moses continues as mediator, communicating the panic of the people to the Lord and following the Lord's instructions as to how to deal with this emergency. How many visionary people who undertake leadership roles in the church and in society find themselves beaten down by the unrealistic demands of those whom they seek to lead, finding themselves trapped between the demands and the realities of a given situation?

Lord God, how much easier, how much less complicated it is to be a follower!

Wednesday, September 24: Psalm 78

This psalm is intended to be instruction to the children. So what is the purpose of telling miracle stories to the children? It is to nurture the children away from simplistic realism, which accepts the world's disbelieving skepticism about the nature of reality. This fabulous memory asserts that the world, in its most concrete form, is open to healing and transformation by the power of God. The alternative, disbelieving skepticism is that the world is a closed system, which remains always the same. Obviously such a view of

the world ends in despair. These instructions are to overcome despair, and to leave the world as open to hope and possibility as our ancestors have known it to be.

Tell us the stories, Lord God. Keep alive our imagination to see the world as you do.

Thursday, September 25: Philippians 2: 1 – 13

How are we to imitate Christ? Paul suggests that we are not expected to copy all the actions of Christ. We are able to be shaped by the same way of thinking, the same attitudes. As Christ's way of thinking dictated the obedience that was appropriate for him, so believers will find the obedience that is right for them by sharing in his way of thinking. Paul is deeply concerned with the unity of the community: "be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." The repetition of this plea underlines the importance Paul attaches to unity within the community. That unity cannot be achieved or maintained if individuals think only of their own interests or care only for their own pride. Unity requires that all share a concern for the common good.

Living Christ, work with us and make our joy complete.

Friday, September 26: Matthew 21: 23 – 32

Matthew tells stories of conflict between Jesus and the Jewish religious authorities. The story reflects historical issues both within the ministry of Jesus and within the circumstances of Matthew's community. But our communities and contexts are different, and there are hazards in making the leap from ancient settings to modern ones. How do we understand these stories today?

The son who does agree to work, but then doesn't, reminds us of all those who declare loyalty to Christ but are not consistent in words and deeds. Jesus' parable is told in such a way that those within the Christian community cannot assume it is directed only to the Jewish authorities and not to them. Doing the will of the Father is a problem for all.

Gracious Lord, count me among the tax men and prostitutes who believe and behave.

Saturday, September 26: Matthew 21: 23 – 32

The prominence of John the Baptist in a story written long after his death reminds us that his message lives on. It is interesting that the text does not exclude the authorities; it does not finally shut the door in their faces. Rather they are invited to rehear John's message and to be open to the reversal it urges. It is the same message Jesus preached; "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." Contemporary religious authorities as well as those of Matthew's day are faced with the demand for a similar transformation in the light of God's coming reign.

Transform our minds, O Lord, that we may have your mind among us.

LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE
September 29 – October 4, 2008

Life before God and life within community. The passages for this week point to a reality that is foundational to the Bible: finding peace with God and finding peace with one's neighbor are interrelated – one cannot be attained without the other.

Monday, September 29: Exodus 20: 1 – 20

The Ten Commandments. Wow! What is at stake here is covenant relationship. These teachings of God do not descend into human life isolated from the larger story. The Lord's instruction to the people is not the order of master to slaves. The commandments of God are God's gracious gift to the people, by which the people are provided with the means to respond to God's love. They are the instrument placed in Israel's hands by a loving and caring Sovereign.

Thank you God for creating and giving us these ten words to shape our life together.

Tuesday, September 30: Exodus 20: 1 – 20

The 10 commands project a principle that is basic for Western civilization: there are certain moral principles that transcend the moment and may be traced back to the very Creator of the universe. The affirmation of the American Declaration of Independence that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator . . ." is one of many instances of the continuing influence of the 10 words on human life and thought.

Thank you God for creating and giving us these ten words to shape our life together.

Wednesday, October 1: Psalm 19

Creation is a witness to the glory of God. To those with eyes to see and ears to hear, the patterns of creation offer powerful testimony to the character of God. Notice in these verses that the elements of creation are matched to verbs for speech: heavens . . . tell; firmament . . . proclaims; day . . . pours forth speech; night . . . declares. All of creation is alive to the reality that it is a creature which points beyond itself. Creation in its splendor is glorious.

The psalm also celebrates the commandments as active, powerful agents of newness. They have creative force to effect change, restore life, make the heart rejoice and eyes to sparkle. Obeying these words is one way to be with God and be our true self.

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

Thursday, October 2: Matthew 21:33–46

Imagine the readers of Matthew's Gospel, a mixture of Jewish and Gentile Christians, in a squabble with the synagogue down the street. Might the early church felt a little comfort from this word of judgment spoken against their opposition? But then the passage takes a different turn. The vineyard (now the kingdom) is taken from the original tenants who have abused their privileged status, and it is given to "a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom." There is no reason for Matthew's readers to gloat over the plight of the original tenants or to take pleasure in their own membership in the "right" community. They cannot count on a guaranteed place. The question is: Are we producing "the fruits of the kingdom"?

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

Friday, October 3: Matthew 21:33–46

"Fruit" appears as a frequent image in Matthew -- prominent in John's message to the Pharisees and Sadducees (3:7, 10) and in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (7:15–20). True repentance issues in a changed life, in radical obedience to God, in more than talk or right theology -- in "good fruit." The whole Gospel provides stories of what the changed life is like, perhaps summed up in the two commandments to love God and to love neighbor. In this parable, the allegiance demanded by God is hinted at when the owner sends servants to get his fruit. For Matthew, God's share is the whole harvest. As the wicked tenants could not get away with their abuse of the landowner, so those who have been entrusted with God's "property" must not take advantage of that trust.

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

Saturday, October 4: Philippians 3: 4 – 14

Paul presents himself as an accomplished Jew who had been deeply involved in the best part of his tradition and who defended that tradition zealously. Paul's interpretation of his own conversion is important for reflection on what it means to proclaim the gospel. Rather than simply offer the good news of Christ as the answer to problems in people's lives, Paul understands the gospel to be just the opposite. It gave him no answers to problems, but instead it disturbed his answers and sent him in search of a new solution, a new understanding. A new understanding of God and life came over him, an understanding that required radical reassessment of past, present, and future.

Holy God, give me the strength to press on to the goal, to make your way mine.



19th ANNUAL TRINITY CRAFT FAIR
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2008 9:30 AM TO 3 PM

For nineteen years the women of Trinity have held a Craft Fair the second Saturday in October to raise money for mission outreach and Trinity projects.

♥ **Country Kitchen** - Jule Penry, Denise Shoemaker, and Barbara Webster will once again head this committee and would like your contributions of baked goods, jams or specialty items. This booth sells out every year.

♥ **Silent Auction** – Leppy Horn is collecting treasures for this popular event. Search for something to donate (valued at \$10 or more) from you attic or basement and drop off at the church office.

Silent Auction- Donations needed. Please keep in mind the Craft Fair Silent Auction room when cleaning out closets in the coming weeks. We are accepting any new or gently used glassware, decorative items, linens, antiques that can be easily carried home by one person.

Special Quilter's Corner- Also, if you have any quilter friends, please pass the word that we will have a special "Quilter's Corner" of fabrics for sale and small quilts for bidding on, all kindness of Herb Fry.

Any questions, please call Leppy 610-647-2424.

♥ **Outside Crafters** – Judy Koch has lined up over 35 outside crafters and artisans who will bring their jewelry, woodcrafts, ladies' tote bags, pottery, seasonal items and much, much more.

♥ **Luncheon** – Patty Roseberry and Margi Morgart will head the group who form the Luncheon Committee. Many hands are needed to help serve lunch and beverages to the shoppers who enjoy this time to rest and socialize. Sign up for hourly shifts.

Most important of all, be sure to mark your calendar and tell your friends and neighbors about our wonderful Craft Fair.

