

## Thursday, January 22

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 19:1-15

### *Reflection*

It is at times unpleasant to read the words of Old Testament prophets. In these verses from Jeremiah, God warns Judah of his coming judgment. As they nearly always did, the people of Judah failed to hear God's messenger. Jeremiah was persecuted for most of his 40 years of faithful service to God. In the end, generations of people suffered all of the torments and punishment that God promised in this chapter.

I recently returned from a choir tour to the southwest. One of the highlights of the trip was skiing in Santa Fe. It was a crisp 33 degrees, the sky was clear blue and there was a good 5 inches of fresh powder from the previous night. The bottom half of the mountain was a bit crowded, but only a brave few took the longest lift up to the very top. I had not been skiing for several years, so I spent most of the day with the crowds getting reacquainted with my skis. Finally as the sun was getting lower in the sky, I took the last lift up to the top. The view I experienced there was unlike anything I have ever seen. I was in perfect silence as I looked out over God's magnificent creation. I stood at the top as long as I could before taking a deep breath and beginning my descent. That run down the mountain is an experience I will cherish for the rest of my life.

What does it mean to fear God? The reality of God's judgment can be terrifying and can cause us to tremble in fear. Yet, when we look at God's incredible creation, and our breath leaves us because of its vast beauty, what is it that we feel? Is it anything like what we feel when we read Jeremiah's account? Both are a demonstration of God's absolute power. There is no duel God. There is not one who creates, and a separate one who destroys. It is the same God that gave us mountains that gave Judah destruction. It is always the same absolute and unending authority that sustains us and judges us. We must yield to both. We cannot choose one and ignore the other. If we say we prefer God's creation to his judgment, we make ourselves liars. They are the same. It is God's judgment that gave us creation. It is God's judgment that gave us redemption. It is thanks to God's judgment that we are living and breathing. "All" is as God saw fit to make it.

*God, the Alpha and Omega, give us the faith the follow though we see dimly and understand little. Teach us to put our will behind your own.*

*Amen*

*Written by Michael Jones, Chancel Choir Director*

## Friday, January 23

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-13

### *Reflection*

In this passage Jeremiah is experiencing the same problems and internal conflict of many who preach the word of Christ in an area where it is rejected. In the beginning, he tells that he is ridiculed in the streets for his preaching. He tells us how men have plotted against him to harm him and even have him jailed. Yet, he knows he cannot stop preaching God's word because he feels so strongly about it.

Many times when we are upset we must remember that God is there to help and protect us. This is demonstrated in the last half of the passage. The message takes a complete one hundred and eighty degree turn. Jeremiah begins to tell how God protects him wherever he is. He imparts how God fumbles the plans made to harm Jeremiah and Jeremiah praises Him for it.

### *Prayer*

*Dear God, help us to forgive others when they try to harm us. Help us to realize that you know what is best. Help us to spread your word and not be full of fear for what people might say about us for it. Most of all, help us to continue to praise you through the good times and the bad. Amen*

*Written by Mackenzie Steen  
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# Growing Deeper

Daily Devotions  
January 19-23, 2009



Written by the staff of St. John's Lutheran Church

To receive daily devotions by email, send email  
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# Monday, January 19

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 9:27-10:8

## *Reflection*

When Christian Herter was governor of Massachusetts, he was running hard for a second term in office. One day, after a busy morning chasing votes, he arrived at a church barbecue. It was late afternoon and Herter was famished. As Herter moved down the serving line, he held out his plate to the woman serving chicken. She put a piece on his plate and turned to the next person in line and said, "Next!" "Excuse me," the hungry Governor said as he eyed the mouth-watering food, "Do you mind if I have another piece of chicken?" "Sorry," the woman told him. "I'm supposed to give one piece of chicken only to each person." "But I'm starved," the governor said. "Sorry," the woman said again. "Only one to a customer." Governor Herter was a modest and unassuming man, but he decided that this time he would throw a little weight around. "Do you know who I am lady?" he said. "I am the governor of this state." "Do you know who I am mister?" the woman promptly shot back. "I'm the lady in charge of the chicken. So move along, mister."

The selection of Saul as king, upon the Israelites' rejection of Samuel the prophet to rule over them, was greeted with suspicion and hostility. The abilities of Saul were not obvious, the support for him was not unanimous, and the start of his reign was not smooth. Most people could only dream of the background, privilege, and life Saul had. His family had standing, livestock, and servants. Saul was not short of any qualities except self-esteem. Physically, he was big, tall, and handsome. Relationally, he was well-mannered and well-liked. Although Saul was capable and charismatic, he was not confident. In some respects, Saul was more comfortable with donkeys than with people, in the country than in the palace, and as an adventurer than as a warrior. The lack of self-esteem and confidence, however, does not diminish a person's potential or disqualify him from leadership. It only serves to magnify God's presence, work and grace in the person's life. God saw the potential in Saul. He chose Saul for the man he was – his character, nature, and qualities. Saul was a man unlike any other in Israel. He was a good man, more so than anyone in Israel. The kind of person God uses is humble, modest, and unpretentious.

*Loving God, when we feel that we are not smart enough, wise enough, patient enough, insightful enough, courageous enough, remind us that your love will always give us courage and strength. Amen*

*Written by Pastor Paul Olson, Lead Pastor*

# Tuesday, January 20

Scripture Reading: Acts 5:1-11

## *Reflection*

This scripture tells of a man and his wife who sold some property and kept a portion of the money for themselves. The rest Ananias took to the Apostles. Peter then rebuked Ananias for lying to the Holy Spirit. Both Ananias and his wife were gripped with fear and died. Did the couple set out to deliberately do harm by keeping some of the money for themselves? Would we do any differently? How many times have we said, "I was scared to death"?

I am a Methodist although I sometimes say I am a Methodist/Lutheran because of my long-term association with St. John's Lutheran Church. Martin Luther is to the Lutheran Church as John Wesley is to the Methodist Church. We have recently been encouraged to read a book entitled *Three Simple Rules* by Reuben P. Job. John Wesley encouraged living life by 3 simple rules: (1) Do No Harm, (2) Do Good, and (3) Stay in Love with God.

When asked which commandment was most important, Jesus responded, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and the second is 'You Shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" If we could only remember to live our lives remembering this, how easy it would be to follow the 3 simple rules.

## *Prayer*

*Dear Heavenly Father, your commandments are simple. May we always strive to keep them and to do no harm, do good, and stay in love with you. Amen*

*Written by Linda Fairchild  
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# Wednesday, January 21

Scripture Reading: Luke 18:15-17

## *Reflection*

Having been a mother for 29 years, a preschool educator for 18 years and a grandmother for 18 months, these verses have always inspired me to bring the Word of God to the children in my life. I always picture a loving Jesus with His arms wide open, inviting the children to be surrounded by His love. I have wanted all children to be able to feel this secure and have been blessed to have God use me to spread His love to so many precious little ones and their families.

Big changes are in store for my life in the very near future. My youngest son, Taylor, will soon be too old to attend his special education classes. In my search to find a suitable adult program for him, I have been introduced to a group of people in our community that most of us rarely encounter. These adults with developmental disabilities have touched my heart and I believe that God has been calling me to see to it that they are welcomed in His house as He welcomed the little children. Looking just a bit further in this scripture convinces me that is exactly what God is telling all of us.

In Jesus' time, children were not a valued part of society. What good would it be to have them waste Jesus' time? The disciples stopped them in their tracks. I can only imagine what they would have done to a group of adults with developmental disabilities. But Jesus had other ideas. Not only did He welcome them, but He had these important words for the disciples and for all of us, "Do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Jesus finds worth in all of us, and tells us not to do anything to get in the way of someone coming to God, especially those who come with the humility and openness of a child.

OK, God. I hear you. I will obey. I will find a way to not only welcome my new friends to church, but to attract more. I will work to remove hindrances. I will try to educate others so that they will understand. I know that it will be a big job, but I am confident that God will equip me with all I need to do His will. Want to help? Give me a call!

*Lord Jesus, you open your arms in welcome to all people. Help us to open the doors of your church to do the same. Amen*

*Written by Pam Smith, Pre-School Co-Director  
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