

Thursday, March 30

Read Psalm 35. This is a personal Lament, as opposed to a corporate or national lament. This is very personal as the writer expresses great distress along with a desire for his enemies to be harmed. Place yourself in the mindset of the Psalmist. Have you ever experienced this level of personal persecution and fear for yourself?

There is a belief among Biblical Scholars that this Psalm is actually in three parts separated by moments of joy and praise for God. Can you see identify the three separate parts to this Psalm? Do you think this is a helpful Psalm as a personal expression of your own trials and trouble? Does it give you relief to read the words of praise and thanksgiving for God? Contemplate these questions and write your thoughts here.

Friday, March 31

Read both John 15:18-27 and Psalm 35. Using these scriptures as a template for you own situation – either from the past of currently – write your own Lament here. Dig deep and express your greatest concerns and emotions. Do not forget that an important part of Lament is given God thanks in the end. Give it a try and connect with our God who loves you as if you are the only one God loves and know that your cares are God's cares. Be blessed!

Message Notes – March 26, 2023

Jesus and the Psalms – *Contrary to All Evidence* *

- I. Christians are not _____ people and I'm sorry if someone has given you that impression.
 - A. I tell you of this experience for two reasons.
 1. First, I want you to be aware that as followers of Christ, the _____ is _____.
 2. Second, each of us must be fully aware of our _____ founded in Christ Jesus.
 - B. This is extremely important as Jesus said to his followers, "If the _____ hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you."
 1. These hard words are included in a larger teaching from Jesus known as the " _____ discourses."
 2. As we think about today's harsh lesson from John's Gospel, Jesus is saying to us, "I know who I am. Do _____ know who _____ are?"
 3. Jesus was right to say so because the early church was certainly hated; Christianity was _____.
- II. Jesus was truly a _____ for two reasons; the first is he spoke truth to power.
 - A. Second, he spoke a word of truth in preparing his followers for their time of _____.
 - B. Jesus wanted _____ to be aware of this persecution as _____ speak truth to power ourselves.
- III. Friends, I am so proud of our church as the _____ of us went to Lansing this past Wednesday for the Gun Safety Advocacy Day.

*John 15: 18-27 and Psalm 35:1-28

- A. While speaking truth to power, our members were courteous, _____ and gracious.
 - B. The _____ of what we were doing was apparent during our time in Lansing and even more so when I watched the news Wednesday evening.
 - C. We might not be persecuted like those first century Christ-followers but then again, any _____ we take or _____ we speak are duplicated and multiplied by all the cell phones and social media outlets available. The world is watching!
- IV. We can never return the world's hatred with _____; I Peter 3:9 tells us "Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called--that you might inherit a blessing."
- A. More important that not repaying evil with evil is that fact that we are _____ to repay evil with a blessing.
 - B. It is important to recognize that "_____" is never used in John's Gospel to describe the community's response to the world.
 - C. Jesus knew ____ identity and ____ identity - both individual and collective - is forever tied to him.

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, March 27

The message began with Pastor Jack describing his interaction with a family in crisis. During that encounter, he shared that Christians are not perfect people. Even Christians sometimes believe that their lives should be better or more rewarding because they have become a follower of Christ. Have you ever entertained these ideas? Have you encountered others who believe this?

Have you ever discussed with others? Consider these questions and write your reflections here.

Tuesday, March 28

Read John 15: 18-27. Wow! This is a very tough scripture to read! That may be why it's not in any lectionary meaning it is not on any rotating schedule of reading for churches. Still it provides a core of understanding that at the very least, the world is watching. Have you ever felt judged by others because they knew you were a Christian or at least you go to a church? Have you ever felt like someone viewed you differently after learning you are a Christian? How do you feel toward people of other faiths? Do you have some preconceived notions that you question as true? Contemplate these thoughts and write your own here.

Wednesday, March 29

Read John 15: 18-27 and take some time to skim chapters 14-17 of John's Gospel. These chapters are called the "Farewell Discourses." They contain the final teachings of Jesus in John's gospel after Jesus and the disciples shared in the Last Supper. IS there anything that captures your attention as you read the passage from Sunday or peruse the other chapters of the discourse? What do you believe is Jesus' purposes in sharing these teachings so late in his time with the disciples? What do you think was Jesus' emotional state of mind during this time with his chosen 12? Meditate on these questions and write your reflection here.

