

February 18, 2010

Scripture Reading: Psalm 51

The Psalms are the Bible's prayer and song book. The beautiful and powerful poetry of the Psalms has been used for public worship and personal devotion for millennia. Many people read and pray one Psalm each day part of their devotional practice. I encourage you to include the Psalms in your daily devotional life.

Psalm 51 is a Psalm of David. It is a prayer of confession, prayed when David was confronted with the sin of his relationship with Bathsheba. (This part of David's life is found in 2 Samuel 11 - 12.) It is one of several penitential Psalms, which confess sin and appeal to God for forgiveness and mercy. Psalm 51 acknowledges that sin affects our relationship with God and praises God's "steadfast love and abundant mercy."

Read Psalm 51 slowly and prayerfully today, letting the words and images of the Psalm lead you into your own prayer of confession. Ask God to search your heart and shine the light of Christ into the darkest corners of your life. Acknowledge your sin. Confess the ways you are disobedient to God's will. Confess both sinful action and sinful inaction. Confess the ways you are holding back from fully following Jesus and serving God. Confess the ways you judge others and the ways you are self-centered. Trust in God's willingness to forgive you: in prayer, ask God to re-center your life.

Finally, remember the words of the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." As you praise God's steadfast love and mercy and call upon God for forgiveness, be sure to forgive others. In Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus connects God's forgiveness with our willingness to forgive others.

If you attended the Ash Wednesday service last night, you saw the sign of the cross on everyone's forehead. Hold that image in your mind as you look at yourself and others in the church and in the world today. This is the Church. We share a common bond: we **all** need the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.