



Daily Meditations

November 8-13, 2021

The Biblical readings are taken from the Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer for Year 2 and written by the St. Stephen's Meditation Writing Team: Dave Boyd, Jon Campbell, Becky Denton, Pat Gillory, Jay Nickel, Bob Reed, and Carroll Wilson.

Click on the scripture reading for each day to go directly to link. Current and past copies of the "Daily Meditations" may be found at: ststeve.org/daily-meditations

Proper 27:

O God, whose blessed Son came into the world that he might destroy the works of the devil and make us children of God and heirs of eternal life: Grant that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; that, when he comes again with power and great glory, we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Monday, November 8, 2021

[Matthew 15:1-20](#)

Not only with our lips

"This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." Matthew 15:8

One of the things I love about the Episcopal Church is the consistent beauty of our liturgy. Wherever I travel, I am assured that any Episcopal church I visit will be saying the same prayers and singing the same hymns no matter where I go. Liturgy is something Episcopalians do well! But with that familiarity, it is also easy to "sleepwalk" through the service without really paying close attention. Lord, help me to keep my mind and heart focused and centered on you!

Tuesday, November 9

[Matthew 15:21-28](#)

Dog food

He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." Matthew 15:26

This is one of those difficult passages in the Gospels. Jesus and his followers have come into Gentile territory, where he is confronted by a Gentile woman begging him to heal her daughter. Matthew's Jewish Christian audience would immediately be offended by this, for Jesus enters into a dialogue with an "unclean" foreigner – and a woman no less! Even to our modern ears, Jesus' reply to the woman is offensive, comparing her to "dogs." And yet the woman persists, emphasizing that even "dogs" are worthy of the crumbs of mercy that Jesus provides, a cogent reminder to us that Jesus' message of truth and mercy is available to all, not just those we deem to worthy.

Wednesday, November 10

Matthew 15:29-39

Multitudes of feeding

Those who had eaten were four thousand men, besides women and children. Matthew 15:38

Wait a minute. I thought Jesus fed five thousand! Where did the other thousand go? Actually, that's another story.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the miracle of feeding the multitudes occurs twice.

In Matthew 14, on the Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus blesses and breaks five loaves and two fish to feed a crowd of 5,000 men plus women and children, with twelve baskets of bread fragments left over. In Matthew 15, when Jesus has crossed over to the Gentile side of the lake, he uses seven loaves and a few fish to feed 4,000 with seven baskets of fragments left over.

There are many theories among Bible scholars as to the significance of these different numbers. Much has been made of seven being a perfect number and 12 being a universally spiritual number (12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles, etc.). But one message is essentially clear above all: Jesus can feed any who come to him, whether Gentile or Jew, man or woman. All are welcome!

Thursday, November 11

Matthew 16:1-12

Signs

The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test Jesus they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. Matthew 16:1

This reading today is rich in irony. Jesus has just fed thousands of people from a handful of fish and a few loaves of bread ... and the Pharisees and the Sadducees ask for a "sign from heaven!" What more do they need? Obviously,

this is not a sincere request, but one more sign of their hypocrisy. This is the true “yeast” of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. One characteristic of yeast is that a very small amount can spread throughout the dough and affect the whole loaf of bread. In today’s toxic political environment, we can see plenty of examples of hypocritical positions being taken and misinformation being deployed for nefarious ends: a “yeasty” work. Lord, help us to focus on the truly necessary work of helping the less fortunate and avoid being distracted by political sideshows.

Friday, November 12

Matthew 16:13-20

Who do you say that I am?

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Phillip, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” Matthew 16:13

Matthew drops this geographical tidbit into the Gospel story “Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi.” Why? This is part of what makes Bible study so fascinating. A little digging or Googling reveals that at the time of Jesus, Caesarea Philippi was well-known for a magnificent temple to the Greek God Pan, god of shepherds and flocks. It was also well-known for various shrines and displays of imperial power. One can imagine Jesus standing on the temple steps and asking his disciples, “but who do you say that I am?” In other words, who do you trust: Rome, Zeus, or God? Good question for us all.

Saturday, November 13

Matthew 16:21-28

Life-saving

For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. Matthew 16:25

Here is another of those maddeningly paradoxical statements of Jesus. In other words, the real secret to saving your life is to give you life away. A life lived only for ourselves is so selfishly restrictive and self-absorbed that it becomes not worth living. Jesus tells us the way to the fullest life is to give ourselves away in a life of service. In his death on the cross he gave us the ultimate example of self-giving.

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