



Daily Meditations

October 11-16, 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 23:

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Negotiating Boundaries

Monday, October 11, 2021

Matthew 10:5-15

"Don't begin by traveling to some far-off place to convert unbelievers. And don't try to be dramatic by tackling some public enemy. Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously." - The Message, Matthew 10:5-8

Recently, my daughter had a near fatal fall while hiking in the Colorado Rockies. Through three weeks of two major spinal surgeries, recoveries and physical therapy, we attended to her needs as best we could through prayer, visits and feeding and encouraging her husband. We give thanks that she heals and recovers much more quickly than we had initially feared.

I feel like I have been blessed with a mission to continue to care for my daughter and her family during her convalescence and recovery. I feel a sense of purpose, and I take joy in cooking for and feeding her, and her family, people I love. I get to have a closer relationship with my grandkids, not just spoiling them, but also guiding and teaching them. [Teaching them things like: doing the dishes includes wiping the table and counters; on-time means on-time regardless of whether any consequences accompany lateness.] I also get to hone my chess game with my 10-year-old grandson.

My wife and I find ourselves living very simple lives, sleeping on a futon in our daughter's house, carrying only one or two changes of clothes, napping when circumstances allow.

This experience could be very different if we didn't have a comfortable and loving relationship with our daughter and her family. It would feel awful if we had to dust our shoes off and leave them to their own devices because of a rejection. Such was Jesus' advice to his disciples for those who didn't want their blessings.

As a psychotherapist, (and a human being) I need to avoid taking responsibility for other people's feelings and behaviors. We call this "maintaining good boundaries." But I recognize feeling helplessness, frustration, sadness or grief when I see others suffering more than seems necessary.

Lord, teach us to negotiate our boundaries well.

The Work of Love

Tuesday, October 12, 2021

Matthew 10:16-23

"When people realize it is the living God you are presenting and not some idol that makes them feel good, they are going to turn on you, even people in your own family. There is a great irony here: proclaiming so much love, experiencing so much hate! But don't quit. Don't cave in. It is all well worth it in the end." - The Message, Matthew 10:21-23

- "God is Love" (1 John 4:8,16)
- Love God, Love your neighbor as yourself (the greatest commandment) (Matt 22:36-40)
- Love your enemy (Matt 5:44)

I think we love God by loving God's creation, loving our neighbors, loving our opponents and loving ourselves.

This work of love creates lots of emotion. Just look at the passions aroused around: loving Creation in the issues of climate change; loving our neighbors in issues like living wages; loving our neighbors in issues of race relations; loving our neighbors in issues prison reform; loving our opponents [enemies] in issues of restorative justice. People get angry (and I feel a bit queasy) when I suggest God may love and welcome everyone, without precondition, regardless of how heinous their behavior. If God loves evil people, God calls us to love evil people, too.

Valerie Kaur and her book ***Revolutionary Love*** inspire some thoughts below.

To love ourselves means to keep breathing, keep alive, keep growing and keep transforming into the person and people to which God calls us, and into what the world (family, friends, neighbors, community, opponents) needs of us.

We love our neighbor when we develop a sense of wonder about their lives, loves, hurts, and grief. We love our neighbor when we open ourselves to their grief, when we grieve alongside of them. We love our neighbors when we fight to protect them from harm. We love our neighbors when we see no strangers but only neighbors.

Valerie Kaur teaches we have no enemies. To label someone as "enemy" dehumanizes them. She suggests the world "opponent," someone who may mean us harm or has done us harm. To love such opponents requires we

harness our own rage until we figure out how to direct the energy in constructive means. When our rage is harnessed, we then listen for understanding of our opponents' hurts and grief. Then we move to re-imagining a new world where we could live in harmony with our opponents.

Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart and in my actions.

Tell Them What You Know About Jesus

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

Matthew 10:24-33

"What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops." - NRSV, Matthew 24:27

Jesus teaches his disciples to speak boldly about what they know about the Gospel of love, the Kingdom of God's love. They know they don't know everything. They know people want to bully and silence them. But Jesus says, "tell the world what you know."

Jesus tells us also to tell the world what we know about Jesus, God's love, the risen Christ. Some of us only know what we have absorbed through the culture, some through what we have been taught, some through personal experience, some through study and reflection, some through prayer and meditation. Regardless of how we know, we know now we see only through a glass darkly. (1 Corinthians 13:12) Still, Jesus encourages us to share what we know.

Amen

What Do Your Beliefs Lead To?

Thursday, October 14, 2021

Matthew 10:34-42

"Whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me." - NRSV, Matthew 10:28

Through these verses this week, Jesus exhorts his disciples (and hence, exhorts us) to boldly show the presence of the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Love, through words and examples, Jesus knows people will resist that Kingdom.

We often idealize and idolize our churches and social circles as *family*. Jesus demands that we place Him above all else, including family. Such a choice can lead to strife, division and pain. I know families who experience such pain and all of them believe they follow Jesus. I can only suggest the test of love, asking which beliefs lead to: the most growth; the most healing; the most joy.

The cross served as a tool of Roman oppression and dominion. The cross symbolizes the resistance of the world to love. The cross meant: "shame, pain, rejection, violence, humiliation and marginalization" For us to take up our crosses means being ready to tolerate the shame, pain and rejection of standing up, even against the state or larger institutions, for justice and love.

Lord help us all.

Purely for the Sake of Love

Friday, October 15, 2021

Matthew 11:1-6

"When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?'" - NRSV, Matthew 11:1-2

Jesus' message keeps surprising us. We think that the "Prince of Peace" should bring peace. John the Baptist probably thought the "Messiah" should bring a Jewish theocracy to banish the Romans and rule Israel according to God's will. It seems in our modern time, some people long for a theology that imposes their understanding of God's law on the rest of the world.

Jesus answers John saying, "look at how God's Kingdom comes near: people get healed, the poor get relief."

Look at how our commercial and political systems rebel at trying to create a country where people get healing, health care, and relief from poverty, purely for the sake of love. It seems that our country takes offense at that.

Lord help us all.

What God Wants

Saturday, October 16, 2021

Matthew 11:7-15

"But if you read the books of the Prophets and God's Law closely, you will see them culminate in John, teaming up with him in preparing the way for the Messiah of the kingdom." - The Message, Matthew 11:13

Jesus here claims his identity as the one for whom all the Hebrew Prophets have paved the way.

And the Prophets consistently say God doesn't care about ritual and sacrifice but rather cares about the hearts of men and society.

Micah sums it up, "Human being, you have already been told what is good, what ADONAI demands of you — no more than to act justly, love grace and walk in purity with your God." (Micah 6:9)

I commend to you the following link for a compilation of many of the Hebrew Scriptures' Prophets' view of what God wants: <https://seekingspiritualitysite.com/2020/07/03/yeshua-on-sacrifice/>

Lord help us all.

Connect with us

