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## Daily Meditations

### March 8-13, 2021

The Biblical readings are taken from the Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer for Year 1 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](http://ststeve.org/daily-meditations)

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## COLLECT: Third Sunday in Lent

*Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

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## Appearances

Monday, March 8, 2021

### John 7:14-36

*"Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." - John 7:24*

Years ago, I volunteered in response to a radio request for extras to be in a performance of the Dallas Opera. Being a confirmed opera buff, I couldn't resist. I had a delightful time attending the rehearsals and the performances and being up close to some wonderfully talented singers. My big moment on stage was during the coronation of the king in Verdi's *Ernani*. My role was that of a palace courtier, playing a golden trumpet announcing the king's entrance, wearing a medieval courtier's costume, complete with mustache and beard, velvet hat and bright yellow tights. From the perspective of the audience, the set looked glorious, with what appeared to be marble stairs descending under a gilded archway to the magnificent throne for the coronation of the richly robed king. But from where I stood, I could see the entire set was made of plywood and skillfully applied paint. The golden "trumpet" I was "playing" was made of Styrofoam covered with gold glitter.

How often we are attracted to the glitzy and the attractive rather than to what is good and true. Jesus was highly suspicious of those who were attracted to Him because of the miracles He performed; He knew that what mattered was faith based on trust in Him as the one sent from the Father.

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## Living Water

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

### John 7:37-52

*"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water!'" - John 7:38*

As residents of the Wimberley Valley, we are especially blessed by flowing water. Cypress Creek, which flows through the center of town, is fed almost entirely by the cool clear waters burbling up from the spring at Jacob's Well. The beautiful Blanco River is flowing calmly just south of town. No matter what else may be going on in my life, that river is a constant source of beauty that feeds my soul.

Scholars tell us the Greek rendering of the phrase "shall flow rivers of living water" is written in a tense that emphasizes a continuation into the future. In other words, those "rivers of living water" flow and will continue to flow without end. What Jesus is promising is not a quick one-time "born again" event for those who have faith, but a constant life-giving flow sustaining the believer's heart forever.

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## Starstruck

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

### John 8:12-20

*Again, Jesus spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." - John 8:12*

If you love watching the stars as I do, we are both indeed fortunate that we live here where the night skies are often beautiful and star-studded, especially on clear cool nights. You will be frustrated, however, if you step out of a brightly-lit house at night and expect immediately to see the stars. If you try to walk, you will be stumbling in the darkness. It is only if you have the patience to allow your eyes to adjust that you begin to see many stars, and then the more you look, the more you will see. You also find that you can see your pathway more clearly from the starlight alone.

Earlier in the Gospel of John, Jesus offered the Samaritan woman at the well the gift of living water. He repeated that offer to the crowds in Jerusalem during the Feast of the Tabernacles. After feeding the hungry multitudes by the Sea of Galilee, He offered them the bread of life. In today's reading, He offers the light of life. Water, food and light: all that is necessary for our spiritual lives to blossom and grow. If we can just sit patiently and allow the eyes of our hearts to adjust to what Jesus is offering, we can then stop stumbling in the darkness and see more clearly the path more illuminated by the light of life.

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## To Tell the Truth

Thursday, March 11, 2021

### John 8:21-32

*"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." - John 8:31-32*

*Oh what a tangled web we weave  
When first we practice to deceive.*

I can still vividly remember 60 years ago my father quoting Sir Walter Scott's couplet to me when I made up some lie to try to avoid being punished for some childish act of disobedience. I can't remember now what I had done wrong then, but I've never forgotten his words.

That's one of the things we learn from painful experience: It's always simpler in the long run to tell the truth, because it's so hard to keep your story straight when you're trying to defend your lies.

What Jesus is telling the crowd around Him, though, is not about the contrast about childish lies and truth, but about the ultimate truth of God. The way to that truth is abundantly simple but extremely difficult: Just follow him.

How ironic that the last person Jesus sees on the way to the cross who could seemingly have set Him free is Pontius Pilate, who instead asks Him, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) Pilate didn't recognize the Truth when it was staring him in the face.

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## Accepting the Call

*Friday, March 12, 2021*

### **John 8:33-47**

*"If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did." - John 8:39b*

More and more each morning I see my father looking back at me as I shave. Recent research has indicated that we are even more powerfully formed by our genes than we had earlier thought. Not only our body type, eye and hair color, and receding hairlines, but also our personality type, intelligence, gifts and talents...we have inherited all these tendencies from our forebears. But at least in the case of our personalities, it is also clear that these are tendencies, not preordained destinies. We have the ability and the free will to make significant choices that through time and repetition will substantially change who we are and what we do.

In the extended argument between the Jewish Temple authorities and Jesus, the Jews are falling back on their proud heritage as descendants of Abraham, the great patriarch of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. But Jesus reminds them that what made Abraham great was his willingness to answer bravely the call of an unknown God, to step out in faith, and accept a total change in the direction of his life. Abraham's decision allowed God to fulfill his promise that Abraham would become the father of a great nation and a blessing to all nations.

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## The Choice

*Saturday, March 13, 2021*

### **John 8:47-59**

*Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death. - John 8:51*

One of my favorite hymns, *I am the Bread of Life*, is sung often at burial services. I suspect one of the reasons for its popularity is the third verse:

"They who believe in me, even if they die, they shall live forever."

This verse beautifully illustrates how profound the words of Jesus are, and how they frustrated the literal-minded Jewish leaders with whom Jesus is arguing in today's reading. Just as Nicodemus, a great teacher of Israel, could not get beyond a literal understanding of what it meant to be born anew, so we struggle with the understanding of Jesus' words here.

How ironic that only a few weeks after reassuring his followers that those who keep his word will "never see death," Jesus was brutally murdered on the cross. Clearly Jesus is not talking about avoiding physical death here, but something much greater and deeper.

Over and over again Jesus emphasizes that we are given a choice: between light and darkness, between following Him or turning away, between life and death.

*But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)*

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