



Daily Meditations March 4-9, 2019

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: Judy Aronow, Pat Gillory, Jay Nickel, Bob Reed, T. Cay Rowe, Lisa Wilkinson, and Carroll Wilson.

Click on the scripture reading for each day to go directly to link.

COLLECT EPIPHANY Last:

O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

In the Beginning Monday, March 4, 2019

John 1:1-18

In the beginning... - John 1:1

In preparation for Lent, which begins in two days, the lectionary directs us to one of the most sublime passages in the New Testament, commonly known as the prologue to John's gospel. The depth and richness of this passage cannot be comprehended quickly or easily. I'm not sure it can be ingested with our limited, literal and finite minds even after a lifetime of study.

These words span the chasm between heaven and earth, time and eternity. They are so simple, yet profound, mostly one syllable. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God...All things were made through him...In him was life."

All the mystery and power of creation is here. I can't tell you what all these words mean. I'm not sure the human mind and heart is capable of fully understanding the truth here. For me the best approach is to take these words into myself, harbor them in a safe place, and let God illuminate them for me with wisdom that is not dependent on word or thought.

Perhaps one of the better things we could do this Lenten season would be to set aside the time, space and silence we need to invite God into our darkness so his light can illuminate our hidden places and his love can fill our empty places.

Who Are You?

Tuesday, March 5, 2019

John 1:19-28

"Who are you? What do you say for yourself?" - John 1:22

When John was baptizing in Bethany, beyond the Jordan, the Pharisees sent delegates to ask John some very serious questions: "Who are you? What do you say about yourself?". John answered, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord."

Have you ever felt like John, lost in the wilderness, crying out of the deepest desire of your heart? Your questioner is not a Pharisee. Most likely it is your own self, asking that most awesome question: *Who are you?* Sometimes the question comes in the night hours when sleep cannot be captured, or in a time of crisis when your foundation has crumbled, or in the midst of a crowd in open daylight. Time and place are not significant. The question is. So is the answer.

Sometimes our world feels like a wilderness with conflicting voices and confusing sights that frighten and unhinge us. John knew who he was and what he was about.

If you are not sure of your answer, perhaps this Lent would be a good time to consult the source of all truth. If you can open your heart in prayer, the Lord will help you to find the answer. Don't be afraid. He knows who you are and loves you just as you are. Perhaps he will alter your picture of who you are, or maybe strengthen your conviction about what you already know.

It's a fascinating quest. You will never find the full definitive answer. In fact, the answer will change as you grow into God's fullness. Don't be afraid of the question nor the answer. They are the stuff of life.

Who Me?

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Luke 18:9-14

"God, be merciful to me a sinner." - Luke 18:13

In this parable of the Pharisee and the sinner, we find some hard words, words that deny what the world teaches us. From infancy we are taught to win, to excel. That is not a bad thing, but if we excel in order to win instead of for the sake of excellence and fitting use of God's gifts, we can get in trouble--big time!

I'm not condoning mediocrity or discouraging striving for high goals. Just the contrary. I think God expects us to use his gifts faithfully, as well as we can, all the while recognizing that the gifts are from him. All we have to work with is what he gives us.

Hubris like the Pharisee's alienates us from God and from our best selves. A healthy ego is absolutely necessary to survive and thrive in our world, but an ego run amok is a sure road to disaster. Whether we need to strengthen our ego and self image or to tame a flaming ego, God will help us.

Of course, we need to do our part--prayer, honest evaluation of our actions and motives, and listening to our hearts. If you sincerely ask for help and then pay attention to the people and events that come into your life, you will see God at work. I can't give you an ironclad guarantee, but that has been true in my life. He loves you just as much as he loves me. He will help you.

Thursday, March 7, 2019

John 1:29-34

"And John bore witness." - John 1:32

Witness is a word some of us find unsettling. We assume it implies some grand proclamation. We hear no proclamation, so how can we witness, we ask.

In my old age, I have come to realize that proclamation surely is witness, but there are many other forms of it. Perhaps proclamation is not your style. It certainly isn't mine. Softer, more subtle words also witness as do acts of kindness, courage in troubled times, a smile on a dark day. It is not for us to decide that witness is impossible for us. Our job is to find a method and style of witness that is true to our nature and having found it, to practice it.

I recently spent time in the hospital and saw many examples of witness--varied but true. A big burly man awakens you at 5:30 a.m. for an EKG with a big grin and a cheerful greeting. An aide gently combs the tangles out of your poor, pitiful hair. A nurse turns your bed so you can see the blue sky out your window. These are small but powerful ways to embody God's care for us. They are witnessing in the most basic way and very few words are spoken.

Perhaps during this Lent we could look each day for ways to witness to God's love in ways that are natural and comfortable for us. If practiced, it will become a habit of heart and mind and we, along with John, can bear witness.

Come and See

Friday, March 8, 2019

John 1:35-42

"And he said to them: 'Come and see'." - John 1:39

We talk too much. The church, I mean. One reason some people are not drawn to the church these days is they think all we do is talk. In some places, that is true. If we could say, like Jesus, "Come and see," maybe more people could hear what we say.

Christianity is not theory or theology. It is doing God's will and sharing God's love in our ordinary lives as Jesus did. When people can see God's love and concern acted out and personified in the lives of real people living real lives, they are drawn to it like humming birds to a red flower.

Our job is not so much to ring doorbells as to make St. Stephen's the kind of place where others see our good deeds and want to be part of that. Then we can tell them, "Come and see."

Follow Me

Saturday, March 9, 2019

John 1:43-51

"And he found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me'."

These days when many of us are afraid to stop to help a stranded motorist, it is almost inconceivable that a person would follow a stranger--just walking away from his old life into a new and unknown one. But that's what Philip did, and the other disciples, too. They did not know Jesus, but when he called, they followed.

Why was that? There must have been a powerful life force in Jesus that called out to them. We now would call that Holy Spirit, but the concept was unknown then and was named in retrospect. We know about Jesus from history, the Bible, and centuries of human witness. We are not unaware and uninformed as Philip was.

Jesus' invitation to us comes into a different world--faster, more complex, more intertwined with the rest of civilization. I doubt that any of us could or would walk away from our job, our family, our identity. We are heavily invested in the goods and processes of the world. It seems more complicated than Phillip walking away from his fishing boat.

When Jesus invites us to follow him, he knows who we are and where we are invested. He probably does not want us to walk away from home and family, job, and responsibility. He knows our main asset is not a fishing boat. We cannot know where that invitation will take us, if we accept it. He calls us just as surely as he called Philip. *Can you hear him?*

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