



Daily Meditations

March 15-20, 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

COLLECT: Fourth Sunday in Lent

*Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.***

Lord Have Mercy

Monday, March 15, 2021

Romans 7:1-12

"But the law code itself is God's good and common sense, each command sane and holy counsel." - Romans 7:12

With some trepidation, I'm wading into Paul's letter to the Romans. I'll need help from my study Bible notes and the easy-to-understand *Message Bible* translation.

My Bible notes tell me that the law reflects God's character and is beneficial to us, all of us, since we have been created in God's holy image.

In our tradition, we regularly say together a confession. We pray it at the Eucharist and in the daily offices. Right in the center we say, "we have not loved you with our whole hearts, and we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves." This summarizes the common sense, sane, and holy counsel that Jesus reminds us is the summary of the law. Have you ever noticed where the confession comes in our Sunday service? It's just before the passing of the peace and the sharing of the bread and wine. N.T. Wright suggests that this confession is like washing our hands before we come to the table to eat. We all know the importance of washing our hands. (N.T. Wright, *The Lord and His Prayer.*)

So, we ask for God's mercy claiming that we want that mercy "so that we may

delight in his will and walk in his ways" to the glory of his Name. Amen and Amen!

With God's Help

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

Romans 7:13-25

"The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge." - Romans 7:21b-24a

Can you relate to these verses? I know I can! Paul is describing his predicament but mine as well. My study Bible notes tell me comfortingly that through Christ we are free from the condemnation of the law, though we are not yet able to perfectly fulfill it.

Take impatience, small judgments, discouragement, and petty jealousies (I could go on). These are never far from me. Like St. Paul, I desire to do good but fail in following that great commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and love your neighbor as yourself."

I'm grateful that we have so many reminders. One of my favorites is when, in the Rite of Holy Baptism, we have the opportunity to communally renew our own baptismal covenant. The question is put, "Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?" And we all reply, "I will, with God's help." "Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" "I will, with God's help." (BCP p. 305) There it is! That's the key! With God's help!

Our Spirits, as Alive as Christ's

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Romans 8:1-11

"It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from the dead life. With his spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!" - Romans 8:11

Paul spends much time in Chapters 1-7 of Romans on difficult topics, including sin. Now as Chapter 8 begins he brings us reassurance. But what is the spirit that lives in us? The mystery of the Trinity is just that, a mystery. Our catechism tells us (BCP page 852), "The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, God at work in the world and in the church even now."

In our age of rationalism and an "if it feels good do it" culture, I think it's a difficult thing to take the Trinity, and especially the Holy Spirit, just on faith. Then there is the next step, believing that the Holy Spirit lives in me. But the older I get, the easier this becomes. I have faith that God, through the Spirit, is transforming me. God has a long way to go in this endeavor, and I rarely notice the progress. But as the writer of Hebrews says, (just before he enumerates a long list of flawed humans just like me), "Now faith is the

assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1 ESV).

The Spirit Helps Us Along

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Romans 8:12-27

"Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along, If we don't know how to pray or what to pray for it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs and our aching groans." - Romans 8:26

I have a cousin I chat with regularly, and most always she reminds me that she prays for me every night. Recently I even found out where I fall on her list of "God blesses." I am up there pretty high, right after her only niece. This always makes me feel good, and my cousin tells me it makes her feel good to do the praying.

My own prayers are often a puzzle to me. I wonder, am I doing it correctly? Did I remember everything and everyone? Am I pleasing God? I imagine God smiles or even chuckles at my foolish uncertainty. For most deeply I believe that God is just happy for us to come before him, to acknowledge him, to let him know we need him. That's why I like this scripture verse so much. I have no idea how the Spirit comes alongside to help me along. But sometimes I do feel it! More often it's one more thing I have to take on faith. But I just love the idea that the spirit makes prayers out of my wordless sighs and aching groans. Don't you?

The Embrace of Jesus

Friday, March 19, 2021

Romans 8:28-39

"None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us!" - Romans 8:37

This is one of the passages that may be selected for use at a funeral service. It sounds a little different in *The Message* translation, but the meaning is just the same. It is a comfort to the bereaved, but also tells us something about the state of the one who has passed on. Both are, through Jesus, with God. I would sure like it if I could feel this more often in my day-to-day life, if I could feel my Master's embrace. But I do love hearing it read at a burial rite, and my heart fills with belief and hope. Hope for the departed, the bereaved, and all the rest of us.

We are told absolutely nothing can separate us from God's love—nothing living or dead, nothing angelic or demonic, not today or tomorrow, nothing high or low, not the thinkable or the unthinkable—absolutely nothing. Thanks be to God!

God's Mercy

Saturday, March 20, 2021

Romans 9:1-18

"God told Moses, 'I'm in charge of mercy. I'm in charge of compassion.' Compassion doesn't originate in our bleeding hearts or moral sweat, but in God's mercy." - Romans 9:15-16

I'm writing this just after our Arctic storm. I have had huge sorrow this week and a pain deep within me. So many people suffered, lives were lost, and it just seems much of it was preventable. This has made me sorrowful. Paul begins this chapter talking about his sorrow. He is sorry that so many of his fellow Hebrews have not realized that Christ is the long-awaited Messiah. Paul goes on to explain some challenging concepts about mercy and compassion. Simply put—God is in charge!

This week I wanted to get in personal touch with someone from our local Barnabas Connection. It was hard to do! Finally I had an appointment with Kate, the executive director. Then Kate had to change the appointment. Later that day we met on the porch outside the Barnabas office. Kate explained why it was so hard to find a meeting time. She had been out helping people! In fact just before the time we originally scheduled, Kate found out about a group of families without water. She was on a mission of mercy and compassion taking water to these families. And she shared with me that one of our St. Stephen's parishioners went along with her. I saw God's compassion, God's mercy in action right here in our little Wimberley, right before my eyes.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

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