



Daily Meditations June 17-22, 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, Dave Boyd, 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.

PROPER 6:

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Wicked Tenants -- The Temple Elite Monday, June 17, 2019

Luke 20:9-19

"Heaven forbid!"

Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem and has begun teaching and speaking in the temple. He has already thrown out the money changers (v. 19:45) and started the conflict between Himself and the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the temple.

Now He tells a parable about wicked tenants who refuse to give the owner of the vineyard his share of the crop. The tenants do not listen to messengers sent by the owner to collect his share, and they eventually kill the owner's son sent by the owner to collect. The result -- the wicked tenants are expelled from the vineyard, and it is given over to new tenants.

In this case, the temple elite are the wicked tenants of the temple perverting the word of God for their own social and financial benefits. Jesus has now made himself into quite a threat to the temple elite. They fear Him. They'd like to kill Him. They are blinded by their own exalted opinions of themselves.

As I read a couple of weeks ago: "Love God. Love your neighbor. Rinse and repeat." Thank you Jesus (TYJ)

The First Trap Tuesday, June 18, 2019

Luke 20:19-26

"Give the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's."

So now the temple elite begin to try to set traps for Jesus -- to trick Him into saying something unlawful. They ask Jesus if it was lawful to pay taxes to the

emperor or not. His answer was to give the government your taxes, but not your soul.

I had a friend in the '60s (he is still a good friend), who was a conscientious objector. He refused to go to war in Vietnam. He took a stand and bore all that the government could dish out in order to sustain his beliefs about the war. My admiration of him and that act of courage swell, even 50+ years later. The government got my friend's taxes, but not his soul.

There is a lesson here from Jesus for all of us. Give to the government or the temple elite all that is due them. Save your soul for Jesus. TYJ

The Second Trap: Seven brothers for one bride

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

Luke 20:27-40

"In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be?"

The question here is bound up in Jewish law of the day, which requires that a brother, whose married brother dies childless, must marry the dead brother's wife in order to ensure progeny by the dead brother's name. It's a strange law, but it was meant to offer a kind of afterlife to the dead man by securing progeny from the wife with a living brother.

As I have written before, I have a hard time with the concept of resurrection. It is so hard for me to internalize that I simply shift my focus to the here-and-now in order to avoid the frustration of my lack of understanding.

A few days ago, I read the words of an ancient Holy Man. When asked by a disciple if there was life after death, the old man's reply definitely resonated with me. He said: "The question is not whether there is life after death. The question is whether there is life before death."

I believe in trying to do the best I can, to do what Jesus said to do -- *now*. I will have good days and bad ones. I will fail and try again. Resurrection will just have to sort itself out for me later. TYJ

Denunciation of the Scribes and the Widow's Gift

Thursday, June 20, 2019

Luke 20:41-21:4

"Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes and love to be greeted with respect...and have the best seats...and places of honor...They devour widow's houses, and for the sake of appearance, say long prayers."

We know folks like this. They are on the news every night. They glorify themselves. They court the favor and recognition of themselves in others. Notice me! Notice me!

There was a time that I washed off the ashes from Ash Wednesday services as soon as I could because I did not want others to think (at work or at school) that I was saying: "Notice me!" Now I know that the ashes are there for me to see, not others. They are there to help me remember that I am but stardust.

This scripture reading is not about wealthy or poor. It is not about how much or how little is "enough." We all have gifts to give. We all know what Jesus has told us to do. We are to perform acts of love, and we are to do so because it is the right thing to do -- *not* because of what we will get in return. TYJ

Don't Worry, I'll be with You

Friday, June 21, 2019

Luke 21:5-19

"...for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict."

I have always wanted to be able to speak eloquently, decisively, and convincingly about what it is that I believe. But, I'm not an attorney. I'm not a debater. I'm not even a very good public speaker. And, over the years, I've grown weary of listening to, or participating in arguments.

At Sunday School recently, we were discussing the Book of Revelation and the so-called "second coming." I have a very difficult time with these visions of John. But my ability to speak my mind that day about the topic was woefully limited. I wished for that wisdom from Jesus.

You see, I believe that we often miss the point when we analyze the processes described by John or the many pundits (current or past) who seek to clarify. How in the world can I know what comes next after I draw my last breath? *Again*, what matters to me is whether there is life before death, not after.

I believe in Jesus and what He said to do. And I believe that I am called to try -- every day -- to do what He said to do. Some days I am better at it than I am on other days. TYJ

Redemption

Saturday, June 22, 2019

Luke 21:20-28

"...stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

As you read this today, I will be in North Texas to attend the first piano recital of my grandson. I am absolutely thrilled by the prospect.

Redemption is, I believe, the action or process of saving or being saved from sin, evil, or error. We are focused, in most Christian thinking, on Jesus as the Great Redeemer. I would like for a moment to focus on another actor as redeemer. Have you ever been redeemed -- saved from evil or error -- by a friend, a parent, a colleague? I have.

When I was a sophomore in college, I was a very self-absorbed partying fool. Just as that academic year came to an end, and as I was suspended from college, my older brother was killed in Vietnam. I was 1-A in the draft. I went back home in disgrace and depression. Unbeknownst to me, that summer my father arranged a series of meetings between me and various deans at the university for me to plead for re-entrance under extended scholastic probation.

When the letter arrived a couple of weeks after my meeting, and I was accepted back into college for a trial semester, my father had these few words for me. He said: "Your mother will not bury another son." My father saved me from myself. My father was my redeemer. TYJ

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