



Daily Meditations

August 9 - 14, 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 14:

*Grant to us, Lord, we pray, the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, who cannot exist without you, may by you be enabled to live accordingly to your will; through Jesus Christ our lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.***

The World to Christ We Bring

Monday, August 9, 2021

Mark 9:42-50

"Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." - Mark 9:50

Jesus was a remarkable teacher. In this difficult and even violent passage he used the technique of hyperbole as he speaks to his disciples. Jesus is making a point for those disciples and all of us who elect to follow him. It is serious business this job of striving to show to others the love and compassion that Jesus displayed.

I was pondering this difficult passage on a Sunday morning before church recently. As worship began, the opening hymn was announced—"Christ for the World We Sing," Hymn 537. As we sang, I realized that all I wanted to say about the scripture was capsulized in the lyrics of this fine hymn. Each verse tells us how we are to bring the world to Christ and who is waiting to receive it. In the words of Samuel Wilcott (1813-1886), it is with loving zeal, fervent prayer, and accord and joyful song that we are to go about our mission. Our commissioning to bring the world to Christ is serious business. There is a long list of just who is waiting for us to begin: the poor, them that mourn, the faint and overborne, the sin-sick and sorrow-worn, the wayward, the lost and those by restless passions tossed.

So, this is how we can be the salt Jesus speaks of and be at peace. The hymn reminds us that we share this sometimes joyful and other times difficult work, as we bear Christ's cross in our own way inspired by hope and praise, because we all belong to Christ.

Thank you, Samuel Wilcott!

Let the Children Come

Tuesday, August 10, 2021

Mark 10:32-45

"And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them." - Mark 10:16

The June Mission Sunday was all about collecting backpacks and purses for refugees on our Texas border. I invited my sweet six-year-old granddaughter Caroline to go with me. She had many questions on the way to church. Who were these people we were going to help? I did my best to explain.

Caroline loved the singing and communion, and then it came time to fill backpacks. She picked out a cute pink pack for a girl and also a purse for a mommy. As the adults scurried from table to table filling their bags with books, coloring books, stuffed animal toys, and hair care items, Caroline was slow and meticulous. At each table she really thought about what that little girl and that mommy might appreciate. I loved being with her watching her go through the process. The time came to add snacks. I think that was the most difficult decision for her. She asked, as you might expect, if there was a snack for her. When I explained to her that all of the snacks were for the mission, she had no complaint.

In one of his recent weekly meditations, Ron Rolheiser expresses his understanding that Jesus taking the little children in his arms was more than a simple gesture of affection. Rolheiser says that, for Jesus, children are missionaries, and his laying hands on them was an ordination, a missioning. Children "reveal to others that discipleship consists in having a heart that is not yet hardened but is still trusting, vulnerable, warm. We all start there, but or wounds cause us to harden. Jesus invites us back to that place, before our hearts grew hard." My heart was softer that afternoon.

First Last and Last First

Wednesday, August 11, 2021

Mark 10:17-31

"But many who are first will be last, and the last first." - Mark 10:31

Unfortunately, for this scripture I must tell a story on myself. Almost 40 years ago I was teaching Sunday school to 5th and 6th graders. The lesson one week came from this text. My curriculum had a good suggestion. So, I prepared homemade cookies and, at the end of class asked the students to line up to receive a treat. Now you can probably guess what was planned, and if the children had been paying close attention, they would have known also. Yes, I started handing out the cookies from the back of the line.

This may sound like an appropriate way to make the point of the lesson to children this age. The problem was I knew exactly which child would push to be in the front, and I looked forward to seeing what would happen when I

started at the back. You see this youngster was one who seemed to always need to be on top and in front, and I must admit that I wanted to see him put in his place. I didn't view his need with compassion. Neither of our motivations were good.

The story the Gospel tells about Jesus involves a rich young man too attached to his possessions. Thinking about this story today, I realize that one of the things Jesus is asking me to give up is my ego. I struggle with this, and perhaps I always will. But, I hope I'm learning to relinquish, and I hope remembering this story will help.

Sons of Thunder

Thursday, August 12, 2021

Mark 10:32-45

"But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." - Mark 10:43-45

Well, here they are brothers James and John, dubbed the Sons of Thunder, with their egos out front and their hearts and minds not understanding at all what Jesus has been trying to teach them. He asked them, just like he asked blind Bartimaeus, "What is it you want me to do for you?" Their reply was that they wanted glory, they wanted to be first! Had they understood nothing of his teachings?

Well, the brothers continued to follow The Way after Jesus' death and resurrection, and they changed. Brother James was the first of the apostles to be martyred. Herod Agrippa persecuted the church in Jerusalem and had James put to death by the sword (Acts 12). John played a role in the founding of the church and was the only apostle not to be martyred. It is thought that he was sent to the Isle of Patmos as an exile and lived an old age. Several New Testament books bear his name.

Both James and John were able to change, and I believe we can, too.

"But friends, that's exactly who we are: children of God. And that's only the beginning. Who knows how we'll end up! What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we'll see him—and in seeing him, become like him." - 1 John 3:2 (The Message)

Your Cloak and Mine

Friday, August 13, 2021

Mark 10:46-52

And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." - Mark 10:51

A number of years ago I was in a group studying the Gospel according to Mark. When we came to this healing story, I read it over and over. It has become one of my favorites of all Jesus' healings. You see, my attention was drawn to Bartimaeus throwing off his cloak. The cloak would have been what a beggar laid on the ground to collect coins. Though he was without sight, Bartimaeus was willing to give up the familiar life of begging in order to follow Jesus into something new. He gave up his cloak.

I began to wonder about my cloaks. What were the things holding me back from fully loving and following Jesus and walking his path? Was it fear, petty jealousy, resentment? You can probably add to this list. So, I took the visual part of this story of Bartimaeus casting aside the cloak, and I began to find cloaks that I needed to shed. It wasn't surprising when I realized that, when I came close to shedding one, there was another under it that needed to be discarded as well.

I will always love this story. I want to throw off anything that prevents me from going to Jesus and hearing his words, "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus, let me see again!

Hosanna in the Highest!

Saturday, August 14, 2021

Mark 11:12-26

"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" - Mark 11:9b-10

"Hosanna" is a Hebrew word of exuberant praise to God. Mixed in with the praise is a prayer of salvation, that God would save his people. And don't we love our reenactment each Psalm Sunday—the swaying palm branches, palm crosses, familiar hymns and meaningful readings. I always look forward to this Sunday and often have tears in my eyes when we, the congregation, shout out "Crucify him, crucify him."

But I have to examine myself and ask, "Do I view Jesus as just someone to help me through the various things I'll be doing anyway in each given day and someone who will bring me comfort in times of prayer and meditation?" Or, am I ready to spread a cloak before him and wave branches to celebrate, and not just on Palm Sunday? Am I ready to go out of my way to honor him day by day?

Often this is not the case for me, so I'll use this prayer.

*"Day by day, dear lord of thee, three things I pray:
to see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly,
Follow thee more nearly, day by day."
Richard of Chichester (1197-1253)*

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