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## Daily Meditations

### May 10-15, 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](http://ststeve.org/daily-meditations)

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## COLLECT: Sixth Sunday of Easter

*O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; 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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## "HODL"

Monday, May 10, 2021

### James 1:1-15

*"And let perseverance be perfect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."*

Count it all as joy. James tells us we can choose to put our trials in the win column. We can count hardship as a credit rather than a debit.

Okay, but since the flesh tells us this is counterintuitive drivel, why would we do that? James' answer is that suffering reveals weakness and imperfection. Allowing, even welcoming, a trial's patient work in our lives will complete and perfect us.

It you've ever traded stocks, you've likely experienced both euphoria and disappointing disbelief, often in the same trade on the same day. Watching, staring at, or obsessing on a stock chart is quite literally watching its ups and downs. Good traders enter a trade with a plan, including where to take profits and when to cut losses. Were our lives to be charted, we could see the peaks and valleys where we knew things were tracking with our plan for success. We would also see the lows where we were forced to let go of a business, career path, Camaro, house, dream, health, or a loved one. And while releasing things valuable to our hearts, more than ever we must HODL to joy and faith.

In 2013, a tipsy Bitcoin investor watched his assets fall 39% and posted on a message board that he was still "hodling" albeit because he was self-admittedly a bad investor. Though misspelled, the term HODL stuck and entered the trading vernacular as an acronym for "hold on for dear life." When we're losing it all, we HODL to faith, which produces the patience that completes us. We HODL to wisdom, believing that God gives it lavishly, though we may have acted as fools.

Choose to call it all joy and HODL.

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## True Religion

*Tuesday, May 11, 2021*

### James 1:16-27

*"Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves."*

On my drive to work last Thursday, I was listening to a morning talk show on a purportedly Christian radio station. The conversation prompted by the hosts and by listeners via Facebook comments was, "What was your parents' go-to threat when you were a kid?"

I was blindsided by the male host's response, which he repeatedly dropped on his audience. "When we heard the police sirens, my mom would say, 'The police are coming to take you to Buckner Orphans Home in Mesquite'." Then he riffed about how dreadful Buckner was and that given a right or wrong side of the tracks, Mesquite was squarely wrong. Who in the world could possibly want to go to Buckner?

One correct answer that I know personally is my widowed paternal grandmother and five of her seven children, including my father in the 1940s. The oldest two boys joined the Navy and Marines, respectively, but the others found a cot, a solid spiritual foundation, an education, community, and identity. Buckner saved their lives, and they returned every year for homecoming to give thanks and fellowship. Grandmother worked in the babies' nursery so she could raise my youngest uncle, who is now in his 80s.

I've dabbled in stand-up comedy, and I know the DJ didn't mean harm. No foul but it offered perspective for a talking point on James 1:27. The threat to our spiritual lives is not a trip to the orphanage; rather, our failure to care about the fatherless with the love of our Heavenly Father.

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## "Prayer of Faith"

*Wednesday, May 12, 2021*

### James 5:13-18

*"Is anyone among you suffering"*

Boy howdy, there is a lot of fodder for faith, skepticism, hermeneutics, cessation (dispensationalism), Garth Brooks, and apostasy here. I will not, because I cannot, resolve the dissonance, but let's open this theological can anyway.

Pray for the sick, anoint them with oil, and they will be raised (my rough paraphrase).

The Faith Healer

Do it and believe. If it doesn't work, you don't believe enough. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective, so if your prayer isn't powerful and effective, do the math.

#### The Skeptic

Go ahead and pray, it's worth a try, but if there's a "healing" it's probably within the standard deviation of an observed secular population.

#### The Figurative Hermeneutic

Stop being so literal; even death is the ultimate, eternal healing.

#### The Dispensationalist

This passage was true for the apostles, but gifts of healing ceased (cessation) after the initial signs and wonders initiating the Kingdom of God through Christ.

#### Garth Brooks

Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers.

#### Apostasy

I prayed. God failed. I quit.

James' thoughts on prayer are Holy Scripture and should be revered as such. They are also not the entirety of God's position on the matter of talking with and listening to Him. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells us how to pray and ultimately surrender to "Thy will, not mine." Christ also prayed until He bled, begging for the cup to pass, yet every Good Friday we remember the outcome of His petitions.

What does the prayer of faith mean to you?

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## "Cosmic, Conquering Christianity"

Thursday, May 13, 2021

### Hebrews 2:5-18

*"He who consecrates and those who are being consecrated all have one origin."*

Before there was Star Wars, there was Hebrews Chapter 2. A cast replete with angels, devils, worlds under subjection and Jesus, the captain of our salvation. Indeed, a cosmic spiritual plot where a people destined to suffer, endure temptations and die were set free by their (our) heroic savior.

Highlighting a few of the very real and precious outcomes:

- Release from the fear of death
- Propitiation, or the complete satisfaction of God's wrath for our sin
- Aid of our high priest who was himself tempted and lovingly helps us

I confess, I do not understand trinitarian doctrine thoroughly enough to present a defensible, watertight rationale for this, but His ways are not my ways and His thoughts are not my thoughts. So here goes.

God cannot be tempted. Jesus was tempted in every way. This is reinforced in tomorrow's reading, too.

God was righteously angry with mankind's sinful condition (see Noah, Nineveh, et al.). Jesus endured "everyman's" temptations but took the jealous wrath of the Father upon Himself anyway (see Calvary).

Our High Priest presented Himself as the sacrifice.

Which begs a couple of questions. Do you know someone who is mistakenly afraid of God? How can the Church better convey that God freely loves them?

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## "The Bold and the Needy"

Friday, May 13, 2021

### Hebrews 4:14-5:6

*"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."*

In the early 1990s, I attended a youth minister's conference with some friends who have become lifelong brothers. Hebrews 4:16 was the theme for two days of teaching, and it became the cornerstone of my personal theology and a significant anchor in our friendships.

There is a powerful paradox in being concurrently needy and bold. This boldness is not exercised with an equal, government agency or non-profit but with Almighty God. Seems backward, doesn't it? Shouldn't He be the one boldly making the "demands?" Well, He's written a few commands throughout the ages, but this verse opens heartfelt communication both ways. From us, He needs nothing, but from Him, we need everything.

What do you need?

- Peace from conflict?
- Love in your loneliness?
- A reason to wake up in the morning?
- Guts to slay the fear that enslaves you?
- A living wage?

Our High Priest has opened the throne room, and all is well for us there. We can go to our Heavenly Father and blurt whatever spills out of our needy souls. There we will find grace, mercy, and abundant love from our Father.

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## "Grow Up!"

Saturday, May 15, 2021

### Hebrews 5:7-14

*"Although you should be teachers by this time, you need to have someone teach you again the basic elements of the utterances of God."*

The author of Hebrews is chiding his readers, even guilt-tripping them, if I am being blunt. Perhaps a more palatable description would be that he is challenging his audience to do more with what they've been freely given. The humanly **impossible** work of redemption and justification has been done by Jesus the High Priest. Given that divine advantage, what is my excuse for not doing what is humanly **possible** to serve and obey Him?

My life is scattered with unfinished projects. We have boxes of puzzles that have only seen their straight edges linked before New Year's rolled around, and we scooped the beginnings back into the picturesque boxes. I have weights that have been used but so gently they'd pass for brand new in a Facebook marketplace. Boxes and stacks and shelves of books that sounded good but were sleepers or served the purpose of occupying real estate on a coffee table, unread.

Things started but not finished. Ambitious crawls but few sprints and zero marathons.

A savior who paved the way, finished His divine work, commissioned a team of apostles and evangelists, put it in writing...You see where this is going.

Guilt doesn't help me grow. Reflection, gratitude, and determination do, though. How about you?

As I walk with God, in which ways am I still drinking milk when I am designed to grow into the meat of the Word?

This needn't be an exercise in shame. It more likely reveals the treasures of a divine breakthrough.

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