



Daily Meditations

April 12 - 17, 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

COLLECT: Second Sunday of Easter

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

God is Light

Monday, April 12, 2021

1 John 1:1-10

Now, this is the message that we have heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.

Many believe that this book in the New Testament is a doctrinal summary of the Gospel of John, written by members of the Johannine Community about 100 years after the death of Christ. Some of the metaphorical language is certainly similar: God is light, and we as Christians are to walk in the light and avoid the darkness. In the light, we have fellowship with one another, and yet darkness provides temptation and the opportunities to fall into very human behaviors such as lying and hating our brothers and sisters. In fact, people who declare themselves sinless are liars, these passages say. But, I have found that resisting temptation to go to the Dark Side, as Darth Vader might urge, is often a complicated matter.

Many years ago, I covered the trial of a man accused of killing his father-in-law in broad daylight outside a Randall County restaurant. Testimony revealed that the dead man had been having a sexual relationship with his own natural daughter, the wife of the man on trial. The accused learned of this fact and emptied the magazine of his Glock pistol into the father-in-law's torso, killing him instantly. The jury found him guilty, and during the sentencing phase of the trial, witness after witness said the defendant had led a stellar life and was

a man of integrity. He lived in the light, so to speak, with this singular exception. I felt the jury would give him a short sentence, a slap on the wrist. Unfortunately, the accused decided to take the stand to tell his side of the story. After he had done so, his attorney asked him if he was sorry for what he had done and hoped for mercy from the jury. "No, sir," the defendant said. "I don't regret it at all, and if I had it to do all over again, I'd do the same thing." The truth did not set him free.

Not Fated to Hate

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

1 John 2:1-11

Whoever says he is in the light yet hates his brother is still in the darkness.

Verse 11 says that whoever walks in darkness may continue to do so because the darkness blinds him or her. What can continuing to walk in the darkness lead to and why is it so dangerous? Walking on the dark side can and often does lead to acts that affect the community at large but also the mental health of the person who cannot see the light. Cruelty can be one effect of failing to see the light. And urge to get revenge can be another. It is tempting, when filled with hate, to strike out, to get even. And the deeper into the abyss one falls, the worse is his or her outlook on rejoining the community. In truth, those who walk in the dark are generally far the worst for it than anyone else around them.

When I was much younger, I worked for a man who promised me that if I stuck with him, I would eventually own 50% of his enterprise, but the situation changed when he remarried, and his new wife decided she wanted all 100% percent for herself and her children. Right before Thanksgiving and Christmas season, the owner fired me. And I hated him for it. As far as getting revenge was concerned, I was helpless. I brooded. I became self-absorbed. My girlfriend at the time (who later became my wife) finally had enough.

"Look," she said, "what you're doing isn't hurting (X) at all. It's only hurting you. Hate will eat you up if you let it. You've got to let it go and get on with your life and make the best of it."

And I did. She was right. I had been blinded by the darkness, and fortunately there was light at the end of the tunnel. It took a while to see it, but I did and was better for it.

The World Keeps Spinning

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

1 John 2:12-17

"Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him."

At some point in our lives, we have learned the hard way how impermanent things of the world are and can be. Entropy is a law of physics from which we cannot escape. Nothing lasts forever, as we have been so coldly reminded these past 12 months as we have watched the Coronavirus take the lives of a half million Americans and millions more across the world.

Some members of my family were reflecting on this the other day as we speculated about how long each of us might live. It was not a macabre

conversation, just a venturing into our eventual mortality. One of my stepdaughters brought up the fact that her grandfather had lived to be 104 years of age, and she marveled at all the changes he had seen during his lifetime before he died just two years ago. The Great Depression, World War II. Korea. Vietnam. Afghanistan. Kennedy assassinations. Television. The internet. Smartphones. Robotics. Sputnik. Moon walks. Mars landers. As an independent oilman, he'd been rich and he'd been poor, then rich again, then poor again. But in the end, there was an end.

In his book called "On the Shortness of Life," the Roman philosopher Seneca writes: "Some men, after they have crawled through a thousand indignities to the supreme dignity, have been assailed by the gloomy thought that all their labors were but for the sake of an epitaph." Today's Scripture reminds us that if we seek permanence, we will find it with the Father, today, tomorrow, and after we have left this life behind.

Beware of Antichrists

Thursday, April 15, 2021

1 John 2:18-29

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that the antichrist was coming, so now many antichrists have appeared.

After the death of Jesus, a great many men profited from his legacy. We read about them over and over again in the writings of Paul, and then here as well. In the context of these verses the antichrist is the one who denies that Jesus is of the Father. But, that's just one example.

I recall sitting in front of our family's small black-and-white television set in the 1950s mesmerized by Oral Roberts, the premier televangelist, as he would "heal" the sick who lined up down the center aisle of his church. My dad, a staunch Presbyterian, did not call him an antichrist. But he did call him a charlatan (and then he had to explain to me what a "charlatan" meant). Oral Roberts made so much money that copycats leapt at similar opportunities, and many of them adapted their messages to suck as many dollars out of Christian believers as possible, thus denying the very things Jesus stood for and in so doing denying Jesus himself. That is the definition of anti-Christian.

The other day I stumbled across a January 13 article by Karen Bennett appearing in "Showbiz Cheat Sheet" (don't ask why) on the net worth of the top 10 televangelists. At Number 1 is Kenneth Copeland, with a net worth of \$300 million. Pat Robertson is at Number 2 with \$100 million. And Texas' own Joel Osteen is right there, too, with \$100 million. You might recall that Osteen made headlines when he refused to open his Houston church to refugees from Hurricane Harvey. Osteen and family live in a \$10.5 million mansion. That's enough money to buy 1,750,000 jalepeno and cheese Whataburger meals. Wonder what Jesus would say about that?

Avoid Sin

Friday, April 16, 2021

1 John 3:1-18

The person who acts in righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous.

Being righteous means acting in accordance with moral law, acting without sin, and it is the avoidance of sin or darkness that is the chief concern of the

writers of 1 John. That means Christians should walk the walk, talk the talk, do the right thing even when it is so tempting not to do so, even when so many of the working parts of the American economic system reward greed and cheating.

Many years ago, I taught classes for those who wanted to become Roman Catholics, and one class was devoted to this very subject. To be Catholic (or Christian) meant to act as Jesus acted, selflessly, without avarice, with service to all humanity foremost in our minds. During a break in the class, several of my students and I went out into the back alleyway so some of them could smoke, and before long we were approached by a young man who told us he needed money to pay for a bus ticket to get to Houston because his mother was dying. My instinct was to doubt the story, but here I was in front of students to whom I'd lectured about being Christ-like. I reached into my pocket and discovered I had only a \$20 bill. What do you think I did? What would you have done? In that instant, I was reminded that it's up to me to do the right thing, even when confronted by a panhandler who might just take my money and go buy booze with it. I am responsible for how I respond, not how he behaves.

The Result of Being Christian

Saturday, April 17, 2021

1 John 3:19-30

Do not be amazed, brothers, if the world hates you.

Here the writers of 1 John discuss the results that Christians might expect from some in society if believers actually do walk the walk and talk the talk. Hatred is one probable result. Shunning is another. Ridicule is possible. But, the authors state, "If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word and speech, but in deed and truth." I think it's vital to remember the ever-present message of Paul to the early Christians about the consequential importance of being in community with one another. We are not in this thing alone. We are part of a much larger whole.

This has been a difficult year for everyone, but I think it's been particularly hard for people such as ourselves at St. Stephen's. It's been impossible for us to be together in person, and Zoom is a poor substitute (although important in its own way). We are so fortunate to have a new, vibrant pastor who is building a team that, when the time comes – and it will come – we can all return to our church home as one family in person. Christians need one another for support during hard times. We need one another for celebration during the good times. Perhaps you remember this song by The Youngbloods and the Kingston Trio:

Love is but a song we sing
Fear's the way we die
You can make the mountains ring
Or make the angels cry
Though the bird is on the wing
And you may not know why

Come on, people now
Smile on your brother
Everybody get together
Try to love one another right now

Some may come and some may go

He will surely pass
When the one that left us here
Returns for us at last
We are but a moment's sunlight
Fading in the grass

Come on, people now
Smile on your brother
Everybody get together
Try to love one another right now

If you hear the song I sing
You will understand, listen
You hold the key to love and fear
All in your trembling hand
Just one key unlocks them both
It's there at your command

Come on, people now
Smile on your brother
Everybody get together
Try to love one another right now.

I said come on, people now
Smile on your brother
Everybody get together
Try to love one another right now
Right now
Right now

Connect with us

