



Daily Meditations

May 24-29, 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: Pentecost

*Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.***

Prologue

Watching to see what has died in the freeze, and what will live, is a current task at hand. My tomatoes are growing, and I hope to be able to pick some big red ones by the end of the month. I am also looking forward to attending in-person, in-building church services again. It is a time of anticipation for me.

Figure the Cost

Monday, May 24, 2021

Luke 14:25-35

"Anyone who won't shoulder his own cross and follow behind me can't be my disciple." - The Message Remix Bible

Here we have Jesus walking along and teaching, while many people are walking along with Him. In 10 verses and three examples, He tells them that "...if you're not willing to take what is dearest to you, whether plans or people, and kiss it goodbye, you can't be my disciple."

It all sounds very extreme to me. Must I give up my wife, my kids, my grandkids, my comfortable home—all of this in order to follow Jesus? I think not. I think what He is telling me is that it will not be easy—that it cannot come without a cost. To me, it means that being a member of the church is not just

buying my way in with a pledge. Anyone can put a check in the plate.

If I am serious about saving the earth for my grandchildren, I must do more than vote. I must wash the gooey crud out of the plastic container before recycling it in a separate can from the trash. It means that I must seek out those friends who are on my prayer lists and make contact, and then offer genuine help instead of just safely including them in my prayers. It means that I must take being a follower seriously and be willing to accept criticism and rebuke in this task of following—from Jesus and from myself. Thank you, Jesus. TYJ

The Story of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Luke 15:1-10

"Count on it—that's the kind of party God's angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God." - The Message Remix Bible

The verses conjure up many thoughts and images for me. First of all, I don't like sheep. They are incredibly dirty forms of livestock. Little baby lambs are okay, though. But I prefer the thought of searching for a lost little boy or girl on the trails of Colorado. If I found them, I could rejoice and carry them on my shoulders back to their family and smile all the way home.

The lost coin story reminds me that I am more forgetful these days. I just can't remember sometimes where I have put things. I once found my iPhone in the refrigerator. I am somewhat accepting of the maladies of aging, but it is frustrating sometimes.

But the image from these verses that I love the most is the party thrown by angels. Do you believe in a concept of angels? My image of them is not some form of being with wings—although if that works for you, so be it. My angels are sometimes other folks just like you and me. And, sometimes they appear as images of loved ones long gone.

One of the things that I love about our church, is that it allows me to conjure an image of angels that makes sense to me. I am free to do that without rebuke or correction. Isn't that just the greatest thing! TYJ

The Story of the Lost Son

Wednesday, May 26, 2021

Luke 15:11-32

"This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive. He was lost, and he's found!" - The Message Remix

Have you ever been lost like this? I mean *really* lost. As a son, I have been just that lost. There were four of us children in the home I grew up in. There were two good sons and two prodigals—my younger sister and me.

My sister had a full scholarship to Baylor in the '70s. She was a gifted violinist. She threw it all away by jumping out of the windows of her dorm after curfew repeatedly and generally thumbing her nose at all the rules. She was kicked out of the university. She left home and went away to San Marcos, where she met and married a veteran of the Vietnam War. She avoided home and both my parents. She moved with him to various posts in the U.S. and abroad for years. Then, thankfully, she returned to the States and patched it all up with

our mom, introducing her to her grandson. It was such a gift to Mom.

Then, there is me. From the age of about 16, I took life for granted and did not really appreciate all that I received from my folks—never gave it a thought. I thought of me, not of them. Then, one day in May 1968, I got the call from Dad. My older brother's helicopter had been shot down over the Gulf of Tonkin and he was MIA. I promptly flunked out of college and came home to drift for the summer. I was depressed, unable to turn things around for myself.

The short version of my little story is this: My father took me aside and said: "Listen! Your mother will not bury another son. Is that clear?" He changed my life that day. I was lost, but he helped me find myself. TYJ

The Story of the Crooked Manager

Thursday, May 27, 2021

Luke 16:1-9

"I want you to be smart in the same way—but for what is RIGHT—using every adversity to stimulate you to creative survival, to concentrate your attention on the bare essentials, so you'll live, really live, and not complacently just get by on good behavior." - The Message Remix Bible

It is a difficult story to understand. I have always been bothered by it. Why commend a thief for squandering another's resources?

But, for me, this story and the next two passages for the week, are about wealth and resources and how we use them. The thief prepared himself for a fall by acting "streetwise" and being clever. Jesus says that one can be smart in another way—by doing what is right, by living a creative survival and not just complacently getting by on good behavior.

Okay, so I'm not an axe murderer. I've not stolen from my employer in the past if you don't count sticky notes and butterfly clips. In my most recent decades of life, I've pretty much just conveniently gotten by on my good behavior. I have not gone out of my way to use my resources for what is "right."

At the very least, I am now asked to consider what that would look like for me. What would that look like for you?

God Sees Behind Appearances

Friday, May 28, 2021

Luke 16:10-18

"When the Pharisees, a money-obsessed bunch, heard Him say these things, they rolled their eyes, dismissing Him as hopelessly out of touch. So, Jesus spoke to them saying: You are masters at making yourselves look good in front of others, but God knows what's behind the appearance." - The Message Remix Bible

By the standards of this country, I am not, nor will I ever be rich. Have I ever been obsessed with wealth or resources? I would say, "Yes." My judgment has certainly been clouded by wealth and resources before. Even those who know me well might be quite surprised to learn that I once wore hand-made monogrammed shirts and Allen Edmonds wingtips. It was an infatuation that lasted years. Hopefully, over the years I have learned a little more about

what's really important.

But the lesson in this bit of scripture for me is not that "God knows." If I were to be serious about it, serious about using resources wisely, I would know myself when I am headed in the wrong direction with resources.

I suppose that it is a great shame indeed that as I finally reach a point in my aging life when I can acquire what I NEED without difficulty, that I can look back on a life where I often squandered resources that I didn't even have to acquire things I only wanted but did not need.

I think at this juncture I should say: Thank God for my wife, my grandmother, St. Benedict, and thank you, Jesus. TYJ

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Saturday, May 29, 2021

Luke 16:19-31

"If they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, they're not going to be convinced by someone who rises from the dead." - The Message Remix Bible

This is another difficult story for me. For many, it is a story about justice and the rich man getting his just desserts.

Well, I think it is about the use of our resources. No one is without fault here. We have all, (or at least I have) engaged in conspicuous consumption. Why is it so hard for us to see it when it is happening?

I do not think the lesson of this reading is that we go to hell for being rich and conspicuously consuming. I do not believe that we need to be threatened into using resources rightly and being merciful toward others less fortunate.

I just need to get up in the morning, look in the mirror and know how very lucky I am. Then, I need to spend the rest of the day acting out that recognition. If that sounds easy enough to you, then there must be something terribly wrong with me. But, I have resolved to try again and again. TYJ

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