



Daily Meditations

February 10-15, 2020

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, Becky Denton, Pat Gillory, Traci Maxwell, Jay Nickel, Bob Reed, T.Cay Rowe, and Carroll Wilson.

Click on the scripture reading for each day to go directly to link.

COLLECT, EPIPHANY 5:

Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins, and give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Who are You to Believe?

Monday, February 10, 2020

John 7:37-52

"Are you carried away like the rest of the rabble? You don't see any of the leaders believing in him, do you?" - The Message

Jesus is stirring the pot. Ever since He healed a man on the Sabbath, the "leaders" have been out to get him--to arrest him. Now He is among the crowds at the Feast of Tabernacles (also called the Festival of Booths). He is teaching among the crowds and in the temple, always looking over His shoulder. For some, seeing and hearing is believing. For others, believing is based on what they are told to believe.

Enter Nicodemus. He is a ruler, a leader, and a Pharisee. After hearing the "leaders" (other Pharisees) chastise the temple police for not arresting Jesus, Nicodemus asks: "Does our law decide about a man's guilt without first listening to him and finding out what he is doing?" And the "leaders" respond: "Are you also campaigning for the Galilean? Examine the evidence (scriptures). See if any prophet ever comes from Galilee."

Just because a prophet might be a teenage girl from Sweden, are we to discount her truth because our "leaders" are telling us who to believe without hearing what she has to say? Should we turn a deaf ear because of her age, her gender, or her country of origin? Well, as you might imagine, I'm in the camp of Nicodemus.

Whom shall you believe? Thank you, Jesus. TYJ

Now, What do You Say?

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

John 7:53-8:11

"Let anyone among you who is without sin, be the first to throw a stone at her."- The New Interpreter's Study Bible

The Pharisees are out to trap Jesus again. While Jesus is teaching in the temple, the Pharisees bring to him a woman whom they say has been "caught in the act of adultery." Being the high-and-mighty self-appointed interpreters of Mosaic Law, the Pharisees test Jesus by telling Him that "in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such a woman."

The Pharisees have conveniently forgotten two other parts of this Mosaic Law that they had intended to use to trap Jesus. First, witnesses must be brought to give testimony. None accompanied the Pharisees.

But Jesus doesn't operate under the 100s of laws outlined by the Pharisees. Jesus will not condemn the woman. Jesus will have mercy. [Do you see some similarity between this story and the story of the woman at the well?] And so Jesus tells the Pharisees that they'd best practice a little mercy themselves or become trapped by their own condemnation. TYJ

We All Have Different Gifts. What are Yours? *Wednesday, February 12, 2020*

Romans 12:1-8

"Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of His body...So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something that we aren't." - The Message

We all have our gifts. There are two things that I'd like to think about when considering gifts. One is the discernment of them. The other is the application or use of them.

For me, the discernment of one's own gifts is a very personal and private thing. The process requires honesty. We are talking here about gifts that we possess, and they are for the benefit of others. One would think that years of experience would adequately inform one of just what those gifts are. Unfortunately, I have not found that to be true for me. I have often meditated on just what grand and wonderful gifts I might have to offer, only to come up empty-handed. I have looked at others' gifts and imagined that I might possess the same. But, alas, that's just not me. So, I fall back on the things that have worked for me in this process before--the small and non-grandiose gifts. I can perform a needed task. I can deliver a smile or a hug. I can visit someone who is down. I can listen to someone who needs to talk. I can show someone that I care.

And, as for the application of our gifts, I believe that we are charged by Jesus to use them. It is our responsibility to use them and to use them for all humankind--not just for the "easy ones." Similarly, we are charged to use them lest they wither and die from lack of use.

All this is easy to say, but difficult to practice. TYJ

Paul's Instructions on the Greatness of Love *Thursday, February 13, 2020*

Romans 12:9-21

"Don't burn out...Don't quit in hard times...Help the needy and be inventive in hospitality...Get along with each other...Make friends with nobodies." - The Message

What beautiful instructions! Nobody said it would be easy.

People in our parish have burned out and left. Pauls says to come back. People in our parish have quit in both hard times and in good times. Paul says to start over again.

Paul says to help the needy, and we are charged to do that with more than just a check. And what about our focus on "radical hospitality?" Is it just a

bullet point on a t-shirt? Paul says that it better be more than that.

And to get along with one another, Paul would have us find something in common with one another and celebrate that, rather than magnifying our differences.

As for "nobodies," we must first rid ourselves of the notion that such a person even exists. This, too, means ceasing to magnify our differences. Then we can just "go ahead and be what we were made to be." TYJ

Be Subject to Legitimate Authorities. But, Love One Another.

Friday, February 14, 2020

Romans 13: 1-14

"Be a responsible citizen. Pay your taxes, pay your bills and respect your elders...Don't sleep with another person's spouse, don't take someone's life, don't take what isn't yours, and don't always be wanting what you don't have. (It) finally adds up to this: Love other people as well as you do yourself. When you add up everything in the law code, the sum total is love." - The Message

Paul visits three kinds of law here: Roman law, Mosaic law, and Paul's insistence that Jesus has summed up all the foregoing laws in his own commandment.

Paul says that you can be a good Roman, a good Jew, and a good Christian by distilling it all down to love.

Could it be just that simple? What would Jesus say? TYJ

Act As You Believe

Saturday, February 15, 2020

Romans 14:1-23

"You are fortunate if your behavior and your beliefs are coherent...But, ...if you notice that you are acting in ways inconsistent with what you believe" (or what you say that you believe)--"some days trying to impose your will on others, other days just trying to please them--then you know that you are out of line. If the way that you live isn't consistent with what you believe" (or what you say that you believe) "then it's wrong."

So, how am I to comment on this passage? It is bold. It is true. I can say that I agree with it, but most importantly I can say that I am certainly convicted by it. Beyond that, it may be best to say that I subscribe to what Paul has written here.

Easier said than done. TYJ

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