



Daily Meditations September 2-7, 2019

The Biblical readings are taken from the Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer for Year 1 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, PROPER 17:

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

My Hope is in You Monday, August 26, 2019

Psalm 25

*Protect my life and deliver me,
let me not be put to shame, for I have trusted in you.
Let integrity and righteousness preserve me,
for my hope has been in you. - [Psalm 25:19-20](#)*

The psalmist must be in dire trouble. He cries out, "Protect me, deliver me, you are my only hope." Have you ever been in a place like that? I hope not, but I imagine you have. It happens to all of us sooner or later. It can and does take many forms: death of someone we love; betrayal; treachery; poverty, financial or spiritual.

When it happens, we find that our usual diversions and distractions do not help. They deflate right in front of our eyes like a burst balloon. Their impotence is so clear we wonder why we never realized it before. Many times even those persons we love and who love us cannot protect us, although they wish they could. We think, "What do I do now?"

Sometimes, as a last resort we turn to God, who has been there all the time, hidden by all that camouflage we throw up to hide us from His sight. It's too bad we wait so long, but probably we are ashamed to ask for help when we know we waited until the last minute. It is embarrassing to say the least.

This psalm and many others suggest it would be a better plan to nurture our connection with God, so we feel free to turn to Him at the first sign of trouble,

not when we are going under for the third time. He is kinder and more generous than we are and will not turn us away because we used Him as "ace in the hole," although I feel it must grieve His heart.

For centuries the Psalms have been a strength and comfort to all kinds of people in all kinds of trouble and a celebration of the good times, too. This book gives a very honest and complex picture of the connection between God and man. It speaks truth. That is one reason we say or sing a psalm almost every time we gather to worship. Think back over your life, no matter how old or young you are, and you will be surprised to realize how many psalms you have said or sung or prayed. What you were saying in those Psalms is "My hope has been in You."

The Shadow

Tuesday, September 3, 2019

Psalm 36

How priceless is your love, O God!

Your people take refuge in the shadow of your wings! - Psalm 36:7

It's not hard to figure out that the Psalms were written in a hot and dry land. They draw pictures of still waters, oases in the desert, green pastures, the cool of the night. Most pictures of reward are either cool or wet, or both.

That shows me the writers saw God as part of their daily life, not some magician in the sky. This image is particularly meaningful to us now as we find ourselves in the middle of a very hot summer. We can appreciate the value of taking refuge in the cool shadow of His wings. It is like walking from heat of the Texas sun into the shade of an old live oak tree whose branches are gently stirring in the breeze. We don't think much about "the old oak tree," but we depend upon it. When we are sweltering in the heat of the midday sun, we know we can find shade and coolness under the big old tree.

Most of us, myself included, take this refuge of God's love for granted. The reason we can do this is because His love is steadfast. It is always there, whether we think about it or not. I can't imagine my life without the safety and protection of God's love. I agree with the Psalmist when he says it is priceless.

Do You Read the Instructions?

Wednesday, September 4, 2019

Psalm 119:25-48

Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law;

I shall keep it with all my heart. - Psalm 119:34

Before one begins an unfamiliar task, it usually is a good idea to read the instructions. Some people can look at a box of bits and pieces and just know how they all fit together to make things work. Not me! I have a hard time even when I read the instructions, but without them I would be totally lost.

I have to admit that sometimes "life" feels like an unfamiliar task. I think the Psalmist must have hit one of those spots, so what does he do? He prays to God to give him understanding.

It's hard to do something right if you don't understand what you are trying to do, but the good thing is we are not in this puzzle alone. God is always there

to help, support, teach and encourage us, even when the world is not. Praying for God's help does not mean we will escape or solve all our problems or win every battle. It does mean we have an ally, a helper, a mentor.

His help comes to us in varied and wonderful ways: sometimes through the words of a friend, sometimes through harsh reprimand, sometimes by inspiration, even in a book.

The tricky part is learning to recognize it when it is offered. The churchy word for that is discernment. As with anything else, skill comes with practice. We need to pay attention so we can recognize God's help even when it comes from an unexpected place or person.

Be Still

Thursday, September 5, 2019

Psalm 37

"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him." - Psalm 37:7

There's no way I can be sure, but I imagine that when this Psalm was written it was easier for people to be still and wait than it is for us today. The concept of patient waiting and stillness is about 180 degrees from today's norm. It is normal to be doing more than one thing at a time, to our detriment, I often think. We see stories on the internet or in the paper (yes, some of us still read the paper) of six people dying in a car crash in which the driver was texting at the time of the collision. There is nothing in that scenario that is patient or still.

That hectic approach to life permeates every waking moment unless we decide to live otherwise. The attitude becomes habitual. It carries over into inappropriate times if we do not exercise some discipline and practice what we say we believe.

It's not that God can't speak to us when our minds are so crowded and cramped with activity. The problem is that we can't *hear* Him. We stay so busy working on our own agenda that we have no synapses available to pick up God's words or thoughts.

The next time you feel overwhelmed, maybe you could try to slow down, calm down, and just be quiet and see what happens. God never thinks inside the box. To make the understatement of the millennium, God is creative. He might have a new idea, one you never thought of. Wouldn't that be a surprise? You will never know what might happen until you try it. And I don't mean try it once. I mean try it again and again until it becomes second nature.

Who knows? It might work! What do you have to lose except stress and anxiety? And, I imagine you can afford to lose some of that!

A Castle to Keep Me Safe

Friday, September 6, 2019

Psalm 31

*Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe,
For you are my crag and my stronghold;
For the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me. - Psalm 3:1*

When I was a little girl, all princesses had long golden curls and lived in

beautiful castles and wore gorgeous sparkly dresses, usually pink. In my mind, I can still see in my fairy tale book the picture of Rapunzel leaning out of her tower window, her long golden hair streaming down toward the earth. I was a plump little girl with straight brown hair, very shiny but brown, and sparkly blue eyes. That picture of Rapunzel did not do a lot for my self esteem, but eventually I recovered.

A castle was a symbol of strength and safety where one was safe and protected and secure. Usually it was on top of a mountain crag, safe from marauders who could be seen approaching from below. This same sense of safety and security is what the Psalmist is praying for here. Keep me safe, keep me out of trouble, lead and guide me so I don't lose my way. Those are very basic human cries, timeless and universal.

It is so easy to get lost, to get into trouble. Many times it happens before we realize it. That is a scary feeling whether you are a 7-year-old girl or CEO of an international bank. God promises He will hear us when we call out. When things turn sour, sometimes ones we thought we could count on evaporate into thin air. The one we can always depend on, no matter what, is the One who made us, cares for us, and is only a breath away, always.

Claim your castle, your stronghold. It is there.

God of My Joy and Gladness

Saturday, September 7, 2019

Psalm 43

*Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead me,
and bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling;
That I may go to the altar of God,
to the God of my joy and gladness. - Psalm 43:3-4*

I can't read the Bible in Hebrew or Greek. I can only read it in English, but even after all the translations it is still beautiful to read. The words and pictures it gives us are so powerful they can change lives and even history. We are so accustomed to it, we sometimes forget to just listen to it. The phrase in verse 4 of this Psalm, "God of my joy and gladness," is very simple and yet such a perfect expression of His nature.

God gives us life. Without that gift we could experience neither joy nor gladness. Furthermore, His love for us provides all the things that bring us joy and gladness: an environment that supports life, a complex magnificent physical body that defies human imagination, people to love and tend to us, and others for us to love and tend, minds that can seek knowledge and understanding, hearts that love, beauty in all its forms including color and music. Once you start the list, there is no end.

It is good to remember to thank Him for His gifts. It makes you happy, and I imagine it makes Him happy that we noticed.

Connect with us

