



Daily Meditations

May 11-16, 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, EASTER 6

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Speak to God

Monday, May 11, 2020

Psalm 56, 57

"Have mercy on me, O God, for my enemies are hounding me; all day long they assault and oppress me." - Psalm 56:1 BCP

"How blest are those of a gentle spirit..." - The New English Bible

While the Old Testament is filled with wonderful stories, the law, prophecies and poetry, it is in the Book of Psalms that the Hebrew people boldly speak directly to God. The ancient Hebrews were set apart, called to be different, and this did not make life easy for them. Even today we see Holocaust deniers and a global rise in anti-Semitism.

We, like the chosen people, can learn to use the Psalms as they did, not only for praise and thanksgiving, but also when we seek help. I've read Psalm 56 many times, usually thinking, "I don't have an enemy (unless it is myself)." Now we all have a common enemy, the COVID-19 virus.

My commentary tells me that David wrote Psalm 57 before he was king. In fact, it is thought that it was composed when he was on the run, hiding in a cave for fear of Saul who wished to kill him out of jealousy. The resurrection tells us all shall be well, and we have nothing to fear, ever from COVID-19. It's Easter, so let us proclaim with David:

"For your loving-kindness is greater than the heavens, and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds." - Psalm 57:10

Sing to God

Tuesday, May 12, 2020

Psalm 61,62

"So I will always sing the praise of your Name, and day by day I will fulfill my vows." - Psalm 61:8 BCP

Yes, the COVID-19 virus is keeping us apart, and we miss each other. I've read more than one list of things we can do to preserve our mental health during this time of social distancing and isolation. One of the activities listed is singing. In Reflections on the Psalms, C.S. Lewis tells us that "psalms are poems, and poems intended to be sung."

We are fortunate to worship in a tradition that uses the Psalms every Sunday in a participatory manner. We either read them responsively or Anne acts as cantor, and we sing a responsive verse. In Psalm 62 verses 1 and 6, "For God alone my soul in silence waits," may be this type of response.

My Bible notes tell me these Psalms were written by David intended for use by a choirmaster and with stringed instruments. So, let's image David as a shepherd boy. Perhaps he was isolated and in a quiet place but with his lyre. Imagine David singing to God. Then let's give thanks and take Jesus as our refuge, rock, salvation, and stronghold. It's Easter so let us sing with David:

"For God alone my soul in silence waits; truly, my hope is in him." - Psalm 62:6

Lament with God

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

Psalm 72

"For he shall deliver the poor who cries out in distress, and the oppressed who has no helper. He shall have pity on the lowly and poor; he shall preserve the lives of the needy." - Psalm 72:12-13 BCP

Psalm 72 is a royal song asking God to bless the just king. Here a perfectly righteous and compassionate king is described pointing to the Messiah. But we are in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, and we find other tragedies. Easter Sunday deadly tornadoes tore across the South, and at the time of this writing a Wimberley family has lost their young son in a dreadful accident. A son, brother, grandson, and friend, beloved to God. What are we to make of all this?

Time magazine (March 29) called upon Anglican bishop and scholar N.T. Wright to speak, as a Christian, to these difficult times. Wright tells us that rationalists want explanations while romantics want relief. But he suggests that "perhaps what we need more than either is to recover the Biblical tradition of lament." A people who lament ask, "why," knowing there may be no answer. Wright goes on to say, "the mystery of the Biblical story is that God also laments." He grieved over Adam and Eve in the garden, he sorrowed over the people Israel, he wept at the death of his friend Lazarus and he laments with us today.

We have a righteous King, a Resurrected King, a King who died for us and knows every sorrow. It's Easter so lament with God knowing:

"He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." - Psalm 72:8

Praise God

Thursday, May 14, 2020

Psalm 70, 71

"Let my mouth be full of your praise and your glory all the day long." - Psalm 71:8 BCP

One of the lists of "how to stay sane with COVID-19" was presented as a Top 10 list *ala* David Letterman. Anticipation built for number one, and it turned out to be quite simple, "be grateful." In Psalm 70 we find the author in distress, and Psalm 71 is written by someone asking for help in old age. Yet in each case, care is taken to praise God.

Each Sunday we sing: "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow." These words were written in 1674 by Thomas Kent who used them as the last verse of two hymns. In fact, our Sunday service is infused with praise to our Lord. "Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory" (from Isaiah 6:3). And Jesus taught us to say, "hallowed be thy name."

The old man of Psalm 71 knows his sins are forgiven, and throughout his life he has relied on the faithfulness of God. And so, even in a difficult time, he offers praise. Why is this so important? I'm enlightened by C.S. Lewis in *Reflections on the Psalms*. Lewis tells us "it is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men."

It is Easter! There are so many ways to praise God.

"My lips will shout for you, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed." - Psalm 71:23

Hope in God

Friday, May 15, 2020

Psalm 106:1-18

"Hallelujah! Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures for ever." - Psalm 106:1 BCP

Psalm 106 is a psalm of repentance as the author recounts the story of Israel and the Hebrew peoples' unfaithfulness to God during the era of Moses. And what a list of sins it is! Perhaps in your household this time of staying in and unusual togetherness has caused you to find yourself in confession. Is there a bit more grumbling at your home like there is at mine, or perhaps moments when tempers flare?

Well, the people of Israel knew of their sins, but they also were well aware of the faithfulness of their God. They trusted that "He remembered his covenant with them and relented in accordance with his great mercy." (v. 45) Richard Rohr, in one of his daily meditations, shares his belief that "the virtue of hope, with great irony, is the fruit of a learned capacity to suffer wisely, calmly, and generously."

In his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul speaks of our hope in Christ Jesus in this way: "Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us" (Romans 5:2-4).

It's Easter, and we have an opportunity to remember just where our hope is placed:

"Amen! Hallelujah!"

Wait on God

Saturday, May 16, 2020

Psalm 75, 76

"I will appoint a time, says God; I will judge with equity. Though the earth and all its inhabitants are quaking, I will make its pillars fast." - Psalm 75:2-3 BCP

Today we find ourselves a waiting people. As King David's people waited for the time when God's judgment would fall upon their enemies and the ancient promises to Abraham would be fulfilled, we wait. We wait for COVID-19 to run its course, we wait for a vaccine, and we especially wait to see each other again and gather for worship with hugs and handshakes.

Perhaps this time has allowed you to practice a hobby or read that book you've always meant to enjoy. This waiting time is an excellent time to remember simple pleasures and cultivate a good habit or two. Let me suggest reading the Psalms each day. Doing so, you will within a few weeks have read each Psalm and be ready to start again. Just go to the Daily Office readings in the back of your *Book of Common Prayer* or look for a Daily Office Lectionary App.

And as you weed your garden, walk the dog, knead the bread dough, perhaps you can think of God's perfect judgment for a time such as this. As Brother Lawrence tells us "we ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed" (*The Practice of the Presence of God*).

It's Easter; rejoice as you wait.

"But I will rejoice for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob." - Psalm 75:9.

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