



Daily Meditations

November 25-30, 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 29:

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

We Walk by Faith, and not by Sight - Hymn 209

Monday, November 25, 2019

I Peter 1:1-12

"By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." - 1 Peter 1:3-4

Oh, how I love Peter. His failings and foibles that we read about in the Gospels are so much like my own. Let's see what the mature Peter has to say, and pray that you and I may, like him, be transformed by our faith in Christ. In the two short letters authored by Peter, he teaches early Christians how to give a faithful witness and show good works to the world.

Peter speaks of "new birth into a living hope" given to us by God's mercy through the resurrection of Jesus and our faith in him. He goes on to call this faith an inheritance. He speaks of the beautiful inheritance, one that I, and perhaps you, can only imagine, one that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Do we find other aspects of our lives to which we can assign those attributes?

Imperishable, undefiled, and unfading certainly do not apply to our bodies nor our possessions. No, it is only that inheritance granted to us by God through our Lord, Jesus Christ, that can be viewed in this way. Like the early Christians, we will be called to "suffer various trials." Through these hard times

may we stand firm in our faith and in our love of Jesus.

Pray with me that we, like Peter, may rejoice always in the "indescribable and glorious joy" of our inheritance in Jesus Christ.

Holy, Holy, Holy - Hymn 362

Tuesday, November 26, 2019

I Peter 1:13-25

"Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct." - I Peter 1:15

Holy! Holy? Can you and I be holy? That seems to be what we are told. According to Peter we are to prepare our minds for action and discipline ourselves.

The quote in verse 16, "You shall be holy, for I am holy," comes from the Old Testament book of Leviticus. Yes, that's the book with the crazy laws like you can't take an ox out of a ditch on the Sabbath. But most of the Leviticus dictates are good and true, and God, then as now, works to guide and form his people into God's very own image, holiness.

I'll try to prepare my mind and discipline myself, but I think I'll start with setting my hope on Jesus who came to walk alongside and show the way. We are born anew, and we must love one another deeply from the heart (v.22). This is only possible with the help and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We can do this, you and me, change our ways and "be holy." My guess is it will be a slow process, and I'll likely see the transformation in you while I'm still struggling to get there.

Pray with me that slowly, ever so slowly, we may find ourselves, and each other, transformed into holiness through the grace of Jesus.

Yes, We're the Church Together

Wednesday, November 27, 2019

I Peter 2:1-10

"...like stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." - I Peter 2:5

The summer my dear friend Kerry and I ran Vacation Bible School at our church we had a favorite song. The lyrics were:

*"I am the church! You are the church! We are the church together!
All who follow Jesus, all around the world, yes, we're the church together!
The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple,
the church is not a resting place, the church is the people!"
(Please hear a strong crescendo on the word people).*

I think the words to this simple children's song might help us with this scripture passage. Jesus defied the temple authorities who used the stones of that edifice to be exclusive, to keep people out. Jesus, on the other hand, walked among the people using all of his senses to perceive need and to heal in body and spirit. He lived by and taught the ancient and greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with

all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Deuteronomy 6:5 & Leviticus 19:18).

So, we become living stones, a royal priesthood, or more simply "the church," when we go out and do the same as Jesus did. It's in our Baptismal covenant. "Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? I will with God's help." And we hear it at the end of our services every Sunday.

Pray with me that we may "go in peace to love and serve the Lord every day in every way."

America! America! God Shed His Grace on Thee - Hymn 719

Thursday, November 28, 2019

I Peter 2:11-25

"Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor." - I Peter 2:17

Peter is teaching his first century and 21st century readers what it is to live the Christian life. So far this week, we've learned that we have been given an inheritance, we are to be holy and together to be a priesthood.

Now Peter's words turn to more difficult things. In the face of evil, we must conduct ourselves honorably so that our actions may glorify God. We are to "accept the authority of every human institution." I wasn't eager to write about this passage, but I happened to ponder it on November 5, election day. It occurred to me that we might find help for how we are to accept authority in this time of contention and division in our country and even our small towns of Wimberley and Woodcreek.

I went to our Book of Common Prayer for answers. In the back of the BCP, starting on page 151, you can find a prayer for every occasion. So, on election day, I prayed No. 24, *For an Election*. Then I found No. 19, *For the President of the United States and all in Civil Authority*, and I prayed that one too. So, what is it that's special about these prayers? Well, they all begin with a focus on God and his Glory, and they all end calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus. For me, that works!

Pray with me No. 22, *For Sound Government*. "O Lord our Governor, bless the leaders of our land, that we may be a people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to other nations of the earth."

Stand Up, Stand Up, for Jesus - Hymn 561

Friday, November 29, 2019

I Peter 3:13-4:6

Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. - I Peter 3:15b-16a

I have a friend whose spiritual gift is exhortation. She is always ready to give an accounting of the hope that is hers in Jesus Christ. I fear, however, this is not a common spiritual gift among Episcopalians. I am certainly more inclined to, with "gentleness and reverence," stand up for Jesus in a different way.

Let's look at words of St. Paul to help us with this mandate given by Peter. Paul's words in I Corinthians 13 might be a model we can use. After describing a variety of spiritual gifts, Paul says, "And I will show you a still more excellent way." That more excellent way is love. Paul goes on to describe the characteristics of love. It is patient, kind and never envious, boastful, arrogant, or rude. Love is not irritable or resentful and love rejoices in the truth. Love hopes and endures through all circumstances.

Here come the catch. Who, what, when, where, and how are we to love? Well, if our task is to display the hope we have in Jesus, then I think we must love everyone and all of creation. We are called to do this always and everywhere. The times I find myself able to love when it's not easy nor automatic, I realize it is possible only through the grace of my Lord Jesus. I hope love may be the way I gently and reverently stand up for Jesus.

Pray that you and I may daily increase in the witness of love.

Brother, Let Me be Your Servant, Let Me be as Christ to You

Saturday, November 30, 2019

I Peter 4:7-19

"Therefore let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good." - I Peter 4:19

Peter has spoken to us about our inheritance, our holiness, our priesthood, our servanthood, and our stewardship with love covering it all. Now we come to suffering. I have no idea why it seems we must suffer, but I do have a story.

My childhood friend, Vickie, was spunky, smart, and strong. She married young, had two children and relished her life as a mom and rancher's wife. Then the diagnosis came. Vickie had lung cancer that had already metastasized to the brain. She lived only a couple of years. Twenty or so years later I happened to run into the priest who had been rector of her Fredericksburg church. When I mentioned the family name and my friendship with Vickie his eyes brightened, and he took me aside and told me what she had done with her remaining time of earth. In addition to loving and caring for her family, she went with this priest on many of his pastoral visits to those who were ill and suffering. Her example led this dear priest to his true vocation as a hospital chaplain.

I don't know what I would do if I found myself in Vickie's place. I do know that I see this servant witness, doing good in the face of suffering in our midst, right here at St. Stephen's, all the time.

Pray with me that you and I may have the grace to display the love of Jesus even in those times that we find ourselves suffering.

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