



Daily Meditations

January 27 - February 1, 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 3:

Give us grace, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Paths to Resolution

Monday, January 27, 2020

Genesis 14:1-24

When Abram heard that his nephew had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred eighteen of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and routed them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. Then he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his nephew Lot with his goods, and the women and the people. - NRSV, Genesis 14:14-16

A good screenwriter could turn this campaign of tribal raids, plunder, capture, and rescue into a pretty exciting movie.

What might we learn from today's reading in light of our country's recent killing of a threatening, dangerous, and violent military leader, if anything?

My interpretive lens: God reveals the poverty and ultimate failure of civil and religious violence through the history documented in the Hebrew Scriptures, and through Jesus' life, teaching, example, death, and resurrection. These stories of early tribal warfare document our early warlike history that we continue to adhere to today.

Hence, God's revelation asks us to seek non-violent paths to resolution of our conflicts.

Lord forgive us.

Promises

Tuesday, January 28, 2020

Genesis 15:1-11, 17-21

"Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness. - NRSV, Genesis 15:5-6

Theodore Hiebert asserts that writers during the monarchic period--following Kings David and Solomon--recorded these stories about God's promises of progeny and land to Abram. These stories explain and interpret the existence of the Hebrew peoples and kingdoms to those people at that time.*

To interpret them for ourselves, let's look at what promises we believe have been made to us. Which promises come from God, which come from our own self-centered natures:

- Wealth?
- Freedom from pain, sorrow, grief?
- Peace?
- Life after death?
- Union with God?
- Participation in God's Kingdom, now?

I choose the last two.

**Harrelson, W.J., Senior, D., & Abingdon Press. (2003). The New Interpreter's Study Bible. Nashville: Abingdon Press pp. 26-27.*

God's Compassion

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

Genesis 16:1-14

The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude." - NRSV, Genesis 16:9-10

I refuse to endorse the ancient cultural idea of the shame of barrenness; I refuse to endorse slavery at any time in history; I refuse to endorse encouraging women to return to and submit to their abusers.

I feel encouraged by the idea that God shares in and has compassion for our suffering, that God takes as seriously a lowly female slave as a mighty male patriarch (as evidenced by making very similar promises to them).

May we follow in God's example.

Choosing Covenants

Thursday, January 30, 2020

Genesis 16:15-17:14

I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you

throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. - NRSV, Genesis 17:7

This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. - Genesis 17:10

God makes a permanent, continuous, and everlasting covenant. God asks for a one-and-done male circumcision for the people.

Paul has let us off the hook of circumcision, and we look for what sets us apart as a community of God. I avoid clannish us/them types of definitions. Hence, I reject demands of specific beliefs to be included in the Kingdom of God. For example, I reject demands for belief in: Biblical inerrancy; literal Virgin birth; bodily resurrection; adherence to the Apostles and/or Nicene creeds.

I reject things that set up as us/them that excludes people from the community of God. I commend the second half of the Anglican Baptismal Covenant (BCP, pp. 304-5) [the part after the affirmation of the Apostle's Creed] that describes our covenant about how to lead our lives. We include a lot of people and a lot of faiths with that as a covenant.

- continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers
- persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord
- proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ
- seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself
- strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

Amen

God is in the Story

Friday, January 31, 2020

Genesis 17:15-27

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" - NRSV, Genesis 17:17

My wife and I need to avoid telling the same stories in social gatherings because we differ on the details and the salient points of the story.

According to the text notes of the *New Interpreter's Bible*, at least two storytellers tell these stories of Genesis: the Priestly writer and the Yahwist writer. The Priestly writer here says Abraham laughed when he heard the prophesy of Sarah giving birth. In the Yahwist's version tomorrow, Sarah laughs. In the Priestly version here, God blesses Ishmael at Abraham's request; in the Yahwist's version, God blesses Ishmael out of compassion for Hagar the slave girl.

Both writers write during the Babylonian Exile hundreds of years after the events about which they write. They look at the miraculous fact that they still live as a people and tell themselves stories to explain that fact. They decide the miracle must be God's choice to keep them alive, so they look back on their history and come to realize God planned it all along. God's promises and plan define the common and salient parts of their stories.

How do we see God's involvement in our history and stories? We all probably emphasize different details, but I suspect we all agree that God is in the story.

God the Christ

Saturday, February 1, 2020

Genesis 18:1-16

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. - NRSV, Genesis 18:1-2

Our Community of Hope pastoral care group is organized around Benedictine spirituality and the Rule of Saint Benedict. Benedictines value hospitality with an attitude that any stranger they meet may be (actually is?) the Christ.

Jesus tells us when we care for the poor, the hungry, the imprisoned, we care for Him. (Matthew 25:40)

I love the idea as advocated by Richard Rohr in his book, *The Universal Christ*,* that we meet God the Christ in anyone and everyone (and everything) we meet. How might we live differently if we really trusted the truth of that and acted that way?

*Rohr, Richard (2019), *The Universal Christ*, Convergent Books, New York

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