



Daily Meditations

September 7-12, 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, PROPER 18

Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

"The King of Love, My Shepherd Is..." Hymn 645

Monday, September 7, 2020

John 10:19-30

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." I will give them eternal life, and they never will perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." - John 10:27-28

The Gospel readings for this week seem to fit our fraught times. We have the death of a dear friend and a murder plot. We will need to look for the deeper message of hope.

There was a division among the Jews. Not all believed Jesus as he began to reveal his true nature, but some certainly did. The disciples, his followers, and others listening with interest knew they were his sheep. They became the flock of believers, as they accepted through Jesus and their triune God the gift of eternal life.

We have stories, parables, and metaphors about sheep in both the Old and New Testaments. Sheep and shepherd stories would have been easy for the first hearers and readers to relate to, but what about us? There is a huge stained-glass window behind the altar in the church of my youth. The image tells more than one story. First of all, Jesus is seated on a throne; he is King. He is however in humble robes and speaking to a crowd of men, women, and children. But what I'm thinking of now is what is on his lap. It at seems insignificant; his left arm is gently enfolding it. In this giant impressive

window, there on Jesus' lap sits a lamb, a small lamb.

Thanks be to God we are part of the flock!..."I nothing lack if I am his and he is mine forever." (Hymn 645)

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

Tuesday, September 8, 2020

John 10:31-42

*"...that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father."
- John 10:38b*

Some wished to stone him, but many followed and believed. For most of Jesus' short ministry, he healed and taught but made no claim about his true nature.

It must have been hard for faithful Jews with a largely pagan world all around them and with Caesar claiming to be a god. What of this Jesus, this man who said, "the Father is in me and I am in the Father?" What side might you or I take?

Today I'm thankful for all the teachers, starting with St. Paul, adding the Creed writers, my family, and the faithful-through-the-ages, which includes many of you! I'm thankful we have the Bible in written form and in so many translations. I'm grateful for our *Book of Common Prayer* and so many marvelous hymns. My heart is grateful for the Holy Spirit for those times of awareness of this presence and the many more times when I'm not.

I can't say I fully understand, but I do know, love, and worship the "Merciful and Mighty, God in three Persons, blessed Trinity." (Hymn 362)

"I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light"

Hymn 490

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

John 11:1-16

"...If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of the world." - John 11:9b

The story that begins here in Chapter 11 prepares us to enter the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. They were close friends: Jesus, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. We all know this story.

There are two problems here. First, with his dear friend near death, Jesus waits two days before going to the family. Additionally, he has just escaped stoning in Judea, and despite his disciples warning, he chose to again go to that region.

Jesus so often speaks or acts in ways we puzzle over. He certainly perplexed the Temple scribes and Pharisees when in Chapter 8 of John he claims "I am the light of the world." Here he says, "If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of the world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him."

May we latch onto this claim that our Lord is the Light of the world and always strive to walk as children of the light.

"And I will Raise Them Up on the Last Day" Hymn 335

Thursday, September 10, 2020

John 11:17-29

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." - John 11:25-26a

One of our favorite hymns comes from the words in this sad passage and from Chapter 6 of this Gospel where Jesus tells us he is the Bread of Life. The story of the death of Lazarus is 44 verses long and split into three parts for our meditations. I feel I learn something new every time I read this passage or hear it preached.

With increasing boldness in revealing his true nature, Jesus declares, "I am the resurrection and the life...everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." I don't pretend to have complete understanding of the meaning of or the playing out of the concept of eternal life for the believer. Perhaps like you I continue to "see in a mirror dimly." I only "know in part." (I Corinthians 13:12)

Yes as C.S. Lewis said of the Eucharist, "The command, after all, was 'Take, eat' not 'Take, understand'." So, we can proclaim this promise of Eternal life through Jesus. So, sing along with me, "And I will raise them up, and I will raise them up on the last day (Hymn 335)."

C.S. Lewis, Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer

"We Walk By Faith" Hymn 209

Friday, September 11, 2020

John 11:30-44

"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." - John 11:41b-42

We're still here with Jesus, Martha, and Mary waiting for the climax. I don't remember the details of many sermons, but I do remember one on this passage. The priest reminded us that Lazarus was like us, flesh. That his body did one day die. And today like us Lazarus waits in the nearer presence of God for the resurrection of the last day. Lazarus waits with all the saints, with our loved ones who have gone before us.

When we face loss, tragedy, or find ourselves in despair, let us remember what Jesus said to his Father, to our Father. "I know you always hear me." Jesus wants us to know we are heard. Our triune God always hears us, and when we weep, he weeps with us.

We recently watched the fine movie "Selma." One scene takes place in a morgue. It depicts Martin Luther King Jr. consoling a man in the process of identifying the body of his only grandson. Jimmy Lee, 27, was shot and killed during a peaceful protest in Selma, Alabama. MLK says to the grandfather

"God was the first to cry." I believe this is true.

O Gracious Light

Saturday, September 12, 2020

John 11:45-54

"So from that day on they made plans to put him to death." - John 11:53

We woke to a bell and right away made our beds, swept the floor, and dressed in the shorts and camp shirts our mothers had carefully packed for us. Summer church camp had full fun days.

Jesus is now facing dark days. He has more to say, more to teach along with prayers and promises, but the plot to kill him is in full swing. So what does this have to do with my childhood camp experience?

Well, every evening we walked to the screened chapel where Evening Prayer was read. A prayer from that service has come back to my mind, and I recite it most evenings as I fall asleep. My research tells me it is from the 8th century. Just imagine the darkness of that time--no light switch or even a flashlight and so many dreadful things might occur overnight. Yet in our modern world we still find ourselves in darkness from time to time. Jesus knows, he understands all about our darkness and he will bring us light.

"Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen." (BCP p. 70)

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