



Daily Meditations

September 14-19, 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 19

O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Gum in Your Hair Kind of Day

Monday, September 14, 2020

Psalm 56

*Take my side, God—I'm getting kicked around,
stomped on every day.
Not a day goes by
but somebody beats me up.*

If 2020 were a psalm! Sounds like our psalmist is living this year with us.

This psalm sounds a bit odd compared to the *Book of Common Prayer* version. It's from *The Message*. We'll be looking at passages from *The Message* this week to hear the psalms in a different voice.

Our psalmist is having a very bad day. Judith Viorst writes from a similar angle in *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. Alexander knows it is going to be a terrible day when he wakes up with gum in his hair. Then his best friend deserts him. There is no dessert in his lunch bag. His mom serves lima beans for dinner, and there is kissing on TV. After many other very bad things in his day, his mom puts him to bed with the consolation "some days are like that."

We've had a few months like that, haven't we? Virus at the door, unrest, loneliness, hurricanes and wildfires, not being able to see one another at church. At least we don't have gum in our hair.

The psalm ends in assurance that God is there with us, though, through the viruses, the loneliness and the wildfires. The writer confidently tells us, "Now I stroll at leisure with God in the sunlit fields of life."

A State of Complete Dependence

Tuesday, September 15, 2020

Psalm 68

*Blessed be the Lord—
day after day he carries us along.*

This psalm reminds me of "Footprints," that popular sweet story that has been made into greeting cards and posters and paper weights. You know it: A man has a dream that he is walking along the beach with God. Scenes from the man's life flash across the sky, and each scene forms two sets of footprints in the sand—his and the Lord's. For the scenes representing the lowest moments in his life, however, there is only one set of footprints, and the man asks the Lord why that is so. "It was then that I carried you," God answers.

The psalmist knows this state of complete dependence on the Lord. He knows the circumstance of having no more energy, no more motivation to put one foot in front of the other. Many of us know that same feeling, the feeling of being carried in the arms of the Lord.

One of my daddy's favorite hymns was "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," and I think he liked it because it reminded him that God was always carrying him.

Remember one of those times when the Lord carried you.

God is with Us if We are with Them

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

Psalm 72

*He opens a place in his heart for the down-and-out,
he restores the wretched of the earth.
He frees them from tyranny and torture—
when they bleed, he bleeds;
when they die, he dies.*

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells of the day of judgment, when the righteous ask "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food?" And the Lord answers, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me."

We have contemporary voices telling us of God's special "place in his heart" for the poor. Rock icon/activist Bono described the place in God's heart eloquently in 2007 when he accepted an award from the NAACP: "The poor are where God lives. God is in the slums, in the cardboard boxes where the poor play house. God is where opportunity is lost and lives are shattered...God is under the rubble and in the cries we hear during wartime. God is with the poor, and God is with us if we are with them."

In June at least a million supporters tuned in to the National Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington Digital Gathering to watch a mix of live speeches and pre-recorded clips of religious leaders and others calling for a "moral revolution" and the enactment of a sweeping policy agenda focused on the poor. Episcopal Presiding Bishop Michael Curry was one of them. "Let

love guide us," he told the assembly. "Let love show us the way."

And we have voices telling us not to forget the poor. Desmond Tutu: "I don't preach a social gospel; I preach the Gospel, period. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned for the whole person. When people were hungry, Jesus didn't say, 'Now is that political or social?' He said, 'I feed you.' Because the good news to a hungry person is bread."

"Love your neighbor," even if they are poor, and maybe especially if they are poor. It's not a piece of advice; it's a commandment.

Work it Out

Thursday, September 17, 2020

Psalm 74

You walked off and left us, and never looked back.

God, how could you do that?...

Why don't you do something? How long are you going to sit there with your hands folded in your lap?

There's nothing like an election year to bring out the worst in all of us. And—egads!—in the middle of a pandemic. We're fighting like a bunch of 2-year-olds, throwing mud all over each other wondering why the other guys can't be as logical as we are. "God, why don't you do something?" we might ask with the psalmist. "How long are you going to sit there with your hands folded in your lap?"

I can imagine God saying back, "Hey, look. You guys got yourselves into this mess. I didn't. Work it out." Any parent knows that kids have to be taught to clean up their own messes, to work out their own problems. God, like a good parent, will be watching and walking beside us, even though we know nothing about it.

Lord, have mercy!

The Intimate All-Knowingness

Friday, September 18, 2020

Psalm 69

God, you know every sin I've committed;

My life's a wide-open book before you.

One of my favorite prayers in the *Book of Common Prayer* is the one we hear most Sundays at the beginning of the service: "Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid..." It speaks so beautifully of the omniscience of God, the intimate all-knowingness of our Creator.

The knowledge of this has been both a comfort and an annoyance in my lifetime. Sometimes I have been like the writer of Psalm 139, desperately trying (I thought) to get away from God: "Where do I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" But more often than not, as with the writers of the psalms, I take comfort in the fact that from God no secrets are hid, and God loves me anyway.

How amazing is that?!

When You Don't Know How to Pray for Them

Saturday, September 19, 2020

Psalm 23

*You revive my drooping head;
my cup brims with blessing.
Your beauty and love chase after me
every day of my life.
I'm back home in the house of God
for the rest of my life.*

I love the sound of this from *The Message*, but I have to admit that the King James Version is chiseled into my heart. I call it up when I'm afraid or lonely or simply grateful.

When I am concerned for family or friends and don't know how to pray for them, I also use it to place them into God's care. "Lord, you are ____'s shepherd. In you, he shall not want. You make him lie down in green pastures. You lead him beside still waters. You restore his soul. You lead ____ in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake. Even though he walks through the valley of the shadow of death, he will fear no evil for You are with him. Your rod and Your staff comfort him. You prepare a table before him in the presence of his enemies. You anoint his head with oil and his cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow ____ all the days of his life, and he shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Try it with a loved one's name.

Connect with us

