



## Daily Meditations

### January 13-18, 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.*

### EPIPHANY 1:

*Father in heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.*

### Intimate Community like Marriage

Monday, January 13, 2020

#### Genesis 2:4-25

*The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." - v. 18*

My spouse and I have been together for almost four decades, and I can personally attest to the truth that it is not good for me to be alone. By myself, I can begin to look inward, seeking my own counsel and become withdrawn and out of focus with the reality of my life. My loving partner helps keep me honest and more founded in reality.

Besides the need for belongingness that we all share, we do indeed need the support, the encouragement, the input, and accountability we can only get from an intimate community like marriage. That it fulfills so many other fundamental needs and desires of sexuality, procreation, and social significance is a real bonus for us.

That our race came to have its arrangement of two sexes turns out to be pretty complicated for us at times, and it's fraught with pitfalls and innumerable possibilities for mistakes. How wonderful that God seems to have foreseen those and provided us with a safe haven in which we can become the most faithful servants to one another and to the Lord.

God sure seems to know us so well, and love us so completely.

# It's Complicated

Tuesday, January 14, 2019

## Genesis 3:1-24

*"By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." - v. 22*

There are few relationships as complicated as the one between Earth and the human race. For a race that evolved completely dependent on the Earth for our nutrition, the air we breathe, the water we must consume daily to survive, we often have an amazing indifference to it except when it causes us inconvenience or suffering.

When we took on the naming of all the other creatures on our planet, we claimed a sort of responsibility for them as stewards of God's bounty. When we chose agriculture and hunting as our way of life, we permanently established a coexistence with Mother Earth that requires a significant degree of respect and sometimes even some supervision and restraint, both of nature and of ourselves.

That we are from the earth is undeniable, as is the simple fact that we will most certainly return to it. Between those times, we may praise its beauty, give thanks for its bounty, and appreciate its nearly immeasurable variety, but at least as often, we may be heard complaining of its droughts, floods, earthquakes, hailstorms, extreme temperatures and storms of every sort. Like most of our relationships, as the modern expression goes, "it's complicated."

May we be in stunned wonder daily at all the Creation with which God has blessed us.

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# Restless Wanderer

Wednesday, January 15, 2020

## Genesis 4:1-16

*Cain left the presence of God and lived in No-Man's-Land, east of Eden. - v. 16*

I have been east of Eden. I have used the free will with which I was created to take myself to a desolate and solitary place where I too was a restless wanderer, far from God. I have been to that lonely place where I participated in no communion with my maker, and the lines of communion between us were severed by me.

I came to know that, as far as God is concerned, our relationship is inviolate and not subject to destruction by the simple whims of simple human choice. God was waiting for me in God's own time, ready for me to accept the love and forgiveness offered, ready for us to resume full communion with one another.

Our ability to make the decision every moment of our lives to walk with God or to walk other paths is one of the earliest of my own theological questions. As a child, I asked why we were created with free will if God knew we would certainly fail to make good choices. I still wonder, but have come to understand that things are the way they must be. Ours is still the choice.

*But the Hebrew word, the word timshel--"Thou mayest"--that gives a choice. It might be the most important word in the world. That says the way is open. That throws it right back on a man. For if "Thou mayest"--it is also true that "Thou mayest not." - John*

## The Fall and the Return

Thursday, January 16, 2020

### Genesis 4:17-26

*At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord. - v. 26*

The scriptures and the history of the Christian church tell the story over and over. The people discover their relationship with God anew and resolve to pray and worship, and they grow in knowledge and come to new understandings of their place in the celestial scheme of things. This is nearly always followed by a time of leaving God's teachings behind in favor of following some charismatic leader or just creating new gods to worship.

In the meantime, God continues to find novel ways to repeatedly offer reconciliation to the people, who eventually return to God's fold. For awhile.

It is very much our own story as well. We may have gone forward at a spirited invitation during a revival, or come to understand God steadily over our childhood, or come to understand who we are and who God is over years of living or church attendance. Nearly always, it follows that we fail in our promissory vows and God seeks us out in another way, calling to us through new ministries, new people in our lives, new needs, new learning.

How wonderful that ours is a God who stands always, knocking at our door.

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## It's not all "Arky, Arky"

Friday, January 17, 2020

### Genesis 6:1-8

*The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time...But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. - vv. 5,8*

We teach the story of Noah in our Sunday School classes as a sweet children's story, complete with children's songs about Noah building an "arkey, arkey" out of hickory "barky, barky." The appeal of a boat filled with animals of every sort and the faithful character of Noah seems especially well designed for kids, at least if you skip over the destruction of all the rest of the created animals, including the human race.

Whether this story was literally true troubled me as a youngster. It wasn't only the unlikelihood that a boat carrying two of every animal ever existed. It just seemed to me so, well, un-Godlike to destroy the very creatures God had created.

Many years later, when my own children asked me their own questions about the Noah story, I suggested that if they were concentrating on the literal factuality of the story, they might be missing an important point of the story: that no matter how bad things are, the alternative of being in fellowship with God is always a possibility. Even today.

So, rise and shine and give God the glory, glory.

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# God's Work Requires Faith & Commitment

Saturday, January 18, 2020

## Genesis 6:9-22

*"Noah did everything just as God commanded him." - v. 22*

On a recent trip to Washington, D.C., we went out of our way to visit the Museum of American Art, one of the Smithsonian museums, to see an installation of distinctive folk art we had run across in our reading. The artwork, *The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations' Millennium General Assembly*, was created between 1950 and 1964 by a janitor/artist, [James Hampton](#), whose entire artistic work is embodied in this one piece made of old furniture, aluminum foil, and found objects. It's the sort of work that could be generated from the vision of a passionate and very personal faith, and it was discovered in the garage he had rented for it after his death.

Just as I imagine was the case with Noah, people derided him and questioned his sanity.

People doing God's work have often been subjects of ridicule and have often been thought to be just plain crazy. Doing God's work, then, sometimes requires faith and commitment well beyond social responsibility. Sometimes it might require taking a stand for an unpopular, but just, cause. Sometimes it might mean helping those marginalized by society--the homeless, addicts, prisoners, refugees. Maybe it means listening to people around whom we would not always feel comfortable.

We do those things, though, in order to be the people we claim to be: Christians.

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