



## Daily Meditations July 1-6, 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, Pat Gillory, 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 8:

*Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

### Not a Word Was Spoken

Monday, July 1, 2019

#### Luke 22:52-62

*"The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter." - Luke 22:61*

When Jesus rose from his anguished prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and went looking for the disciples, he found them asleep. Almost immediately a crowd approached, Judas identified him, and the crowd (the chief priest, officers of the temple guard, and the elders) seized Jesus and led him away to the home of the high priest.

Peter followed the crowd and made a place for himself in the courtyard around the fire. Three different people spotted him in the crowd and accused him of being a follower of Jesus. He denied it vehemently.

When the crowd brought Jesus through the courtyard on their way to the house, Jesus saw Peter in the firelight and turned and looked straight at him. No words were exchanged but in the light of Jesus' gaze, Peter remembered the sound of the cock crowing and Jesus saying to him: "Before the cock crows today, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Have you ever thought about how you will feel when you meet Jesus face to face, and he looks straight at you? I imagine he will see right through all our tricks and pretenses and the games we play and that we will see ourselves that way, too, just as we really are. I can't know for sure, but I think we might be

feeling remorse for some of the things we have done or left undone and have not seen clearly until that moment. That is when we will truly realize what a wonder it is that he loves us as we really are and not as we fantasize.

This reminds me of that Southern Baptist hymn I sang as a girl, "Just as I am, without one plea." If you don't know or remember the words, look them up. It is in our hymnal too (No. 693), and it will bring back many memories for all of you older ex-Baptists who now are a part of St. Stephen's. I would imagine it is a favorite at the Deer Creek hymn sing-along, too. It might seem a bit too sentimental for you, younger folk but it is true. Think about poor old Peter, sitting alone in the dark, weeping bitterly. He later became Bishop of Rome, but I doubt he never forgot this night.

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## **What Did He Know and When Did He Know It?**

*Tuesday, July 2, 2019*

### **Luke 22:63-71**

*"They all asked, 'Are you then the Son of God'? He replied, 'You are right in saying I am'." - Luke 22:70*

There are at least two schools of thought on this, probably more. Some people think Jesus always knew where he was headed and what the future held for him. Others, like me, who believe he was truly human, think he lived in uncertainty like we do and in his total humanity lived a godly life. This binds me closer to him and confirms the strength of his love for humanity because he really knows how hard it is to be the person God calls us to be.

That puts me in an awkward spot with this passage as I am not sure he knew at that moment that he was the Son of God. The gospels were written many decades after the events described and not by eyewitnesses. None of it can be proven scientifically anyway and is believed by faith, not knowledge. The truth is he was and is the Son of God and whether he understood it at this moment is not very important to the story as a whole.

I don't plan to argue this point with anyone at all. You are as free to believe what you believe just as I am. I am just thankful he was filled with his father's love and that he loved us to the end.

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## **Innocent or Guilty?**

*Wednesday, July 3, 2019*

### **Luke 23:1-12**

*"And Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitude, 'I find no crime in this man'." - Luke 23:4*

This decision is of ultimate significance to any person on trial, pickpocket or murderer. In this trial the verdict was critical not only for the accused, Jesus, but for the whole world for all time.

Although troublemakers were stirring up the crowd and rabble-rousers were agitating with loud shouts and ugly words, Pilate did not see Jesus as guilty and said so. Obviously, the crowd disagreed with Pilate and was out for blood.

When Pilate learned that Jesus was a Galilean, he thought he saw a way to

extricate himself from this tense situation. Herod had jurisdiction over Galilee and Herod was in town for the Passover celebration. Since Jesus was a subject of Herod, Pilate promptly passed the buck and had Jesus taken to Herod, thinking he had ended his predicament.

I can identify with Pilate. Many times I have looked for a "way out" instead of a solution. *Have you ever done that?* Evasion is usually easier, or looks easier, than taking a stand and facing the issue head on. Pilate's ploy did not work this time. Herod, irritated by Jesus' long silence and refusal to do a miracle show for him, grew contemptuous, mocked him, and sent him right back to Pilate.

Now these two men face each other again. *What will Pilate do this time? What will Jesus do?*

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## And the Winner is...???

Thursday, July 4, 2019

### Luke 23:13-25

*"And their voices prevailed." - Luke 23:23b*

*Good question!*

I guess Barabas did all right. He got to live. Pilate acted against his conscience and his inner truth and had to live with that knowledge. The people thought they won, but they did not even know what the question was. I guess Jesus was the real winner. He died a humiliating, painful death, but he was true to himself, his God, and his purpose.

He surely did not look like a winner. An innocent man, he was executed by human malice and weakness. He looked like a loser, a failure.

Sometimes what we see with our eyes is not the whole truth or even part of the truth. The crowd thought they had prevailed. Their eyes confirmed it. But God, through his son Jesus, or Jesus through his father God, won that duel, not just for the day, but forever.

Our world is full of paradox every day, not just at climatic moments. We need to leave room for mystery and awe. We aren't as smart as we think we are, and we don't see as clearly as we like to think we do. This should not leave us fearful of what we don't know. Rather, let us be thankful that God is in charge and that he loves us in spite of ourselves.

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## Sad Words

Friday, July 5, 2019

### Luke 23:26-31

*"But Jesus turning to them said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children'." - Luke 23:28*

These are some of the saddest words I have ever heard. The word "weep" is a sad word. Listen to it. There is no life in it. It is dead.

Weeping is not a bad thing. It is very healthy when it expresses grief and a feeling of loss. But weeping comes from a sad place, deep inside.

Here is Jesus on that long, lonely walk to Golgotha, facing his own death within the hour. He looks beyond his immediate situation to that of the people around him, and weeps for them, not for himself. They have no idea what lies ahead of them and their children. Before many years have passed, Rome will have conquered Jerusalem and the people will be scattered, like the earlier exile to Babylon. The exile was a sad time. Open your Bible or Prayer Book to Psalm 137 and let the exiles themselves speak to you of that time. It will break your heart.

It might seem we have lost focus here and deviated from the real story of Jesus on his way to the cross. I don't think so. I think this is the real story. Jesus is not telling us how to feel or how to act. He is showing us by his own action, in his own life, how God wants us to live and to love. This is compassion personified.

When we feel too burdened, or too busy, or too tired to reach out to people in need let's try to remember what Jesus did in this most stressful hour. Perhaps that will give us the strength and courage to reach out: to pray, to weep, to hug, to smile, to listen.

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## Jesus, Remember Me

Saturday, July 6, 2019

### Luke 23:32-43

*"And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!'" - Luke 23:42*

The penitent criminal on the cross next to Jesus speaks for all of us when he makes this heartfelt plea. "Jesus remember me..." When we think of our own death, we walk into mystery. No matter how much faith we have it is still a mystery.

Wherever or whenever or however we make that journey, we know that, metaphorically speaking, Jesus is already there. Our deepest need as we walk into the unknown might be to see one who knows us, really knows us, and remembers who we are--in other words, a friend. My mind jumps immediately to that old hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

Friendship is one of life's most precious gifts. It is not to be taken for granted. It needs loving care and attention, water and food, like a tender flower that grows into a strong and fruitful tree. With human friends, time spent in companionship is vital. Open communication and honesty are helpful. Love grows strong as we share life with our friend.

If we want to be friends with Jesus, it seems to me the same ideas would apply. Companionship, communication, honesty, and sharing would deepen our connection with him as it would with our friend and/or lover. All of these benefits can be attained through prayer. It seems a good idea to strengthen our friendship now when it can mean so much to us as we make our way through the "now" to the "then."

If you aren't sure how to do this, you could start with one of the most ancient prayers of the church: "Jesus, remember me now and at the hour of my death."

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