



## **Daily Meditations**

### **April 22-27, 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: Judy Aronow, Pat Gillory, Jay Nickel, Bob Reed, T. Cay Rowe, Lisa Wilkinson, and Carroll Wilson.*

*Click on the scripture reading for each day to go directly to link.*

### **COLLECT for Easter 1:**

*O God, who made this most holy night to shine with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: Stir up in your Church that Spirit of adoption which is given to us in Baptism, that we, being renewed both in body and mind, may worship you in sincerity and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.***

### **Jesus the Way**

*Monday, April 22, 2019*

#### **John 14:1-14**

*"I am the Way..." - John 14:6*

Jesus is having a final conversation with the disciples (a Farewell Discourse) before His arrest, sentencing, and death. This is not a speech about how to get to heaven or about what it will be like in our room in the heavenly mansion (as I think it may often be interpreted by those in attendance at many a funeral). No. These disciples have had a nebulous and incomprehensible concept of a God. Jesus is saying that He has come to put flesh and bones on this concept. Jesus is reassuring the disciples.

This "Discourse" gives me great comfort. In all of my 70+ years, I have wrestled with that same nebulous and incomprehensible concept of God. I have vacillated between the extremes of viewing others with awe or with disbelief when they seemed to have a concept of God "all figured out."

Now this passage of scripture encourages me to believe that what Jesus did, said, and told me to do were the manifested flesh and blood instructions of a God on earth. Now I can be freed of incomprehensible images and their accompanying frustration.

Now I am freed to believe in Jesus--what He did, said, and told me to do. This, I can do (knowing that I will fall short every day). Thank you, Jesus!

### **Spirit**

*Tuesday, April 23, 2019*

#### **John 14:15-31**

*"The Holy Spirit...will...remind you of all that I have said to you." - John 14:26*

The disciples are being told by Jesus that He is going away. He is going to the Father, but He will not leave them alone and without guidance. The Father will send the Holy Spirit--the Comforter, Advocate, Counselor, Helper--to "abide" in them. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to continue the disciples' relationship with Jesus--to guide and remind them of His words and His actions.

More than comfort, advocacy, counsel, or help, I *need* a guide. I *need* a reminder of what Jesus said, what He did, and what I am supposed to do. This guide will remind me that through acts of love, I will be holding up my end of our relationship.

This Holy Spirit--this guide--will be in me. My responsibility is to listen and to then act in love. Some days that's a pretty tall order. Thank you, Jesus.

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## The Fruit of the Vine

Wednesday, April 24, 2019

### John 15:1-11

*"...that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." - John 15:11*

This passage is known as the final "I am" saying in the Gospels. It is the vine imagery of vine grower, vine, vine branches, and fruit. Jesus tells the disciples that the Father is the vine grower and that He is the true vine. The disciples are likened to the branches of the vine that are either pruned properly to bear more fruit, or they are removed and cast aside because they bear no fruit. The fruits are the acts of love that the disciples (*and you and I*) perform in response to our guide--the Holy Spirit within us.

As simplistic as this imagery may seem at first glance, for me, there is at least one great truth in it. It comes at the end of the passage--verse 11. If I, as a branch, can bear fruit by performing acts of love, then there is *joy*. The joy of Jesus will be in me, and my joy will be complete. I think Jesus just might be on to something here.

If I, in my day full of distractions, stop and take the time to perform an act of love, I *do* feel the joy. It does not need to be a momentous act. Text a friend to tell him that you care. Compliment the grocery cashier and then tell the store manager that he/she is a good employee. Tell a colleague that you enjoy working with her. Help a struggling stranger with some extra food. These are the grapes.

I know I don't do it every day. I should, but I don't. But when there are grapes, there is joy. Thank you, Jesus.

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## Hatred

Thursday, April 25, 2019

### John 15:12-27

*"They hated Me without a cause." - John 15:25b*

I have truly wrestled with this passage to find in me something to say about the hatred that Jesus describes. Jesus is telling his disciples that since He is hated, they also will be hated, persecuted, and even killed.

But, for the writer of John, hate is simply living apart from the presence and works of Jesus. This sounds to me to be more like a definition of sin rather than hate. So according to John, how do the disciples (or we) get out of such a situation? Well, enter now the Holy Spirit *again*--our great guide and reminder.

And what will our great guide and reminder offer to us to get us back on track again? We will be told to get out there and make grapes--acts of love. And we will be asked by the Holy Spirit to encourage others to do the same. Thank you, Jesus.

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## Excommunication

April 26, 2019

### John 16:1-15

*"They will put you out of the synagogues." - John 16:2a*

Jesus is explaining to the disciples once again that their road is about to get very tough. He wants to tell them ahead of time so that they will remember what He said. And, He tells them that the Holy Spirit will be there for them when the going gets tough. He foretells of excommunication and even death as the price for believing in Him.

But He says that the Holy Spirit will "prove the world wrong."

As I write this, it is only a few days since the United Methodist Church (worldwide) has met to discuss the issues of gay and lesbian ministers (and bishops), as well as the issue of performing marriages for gay and lesbian couples. Not only did the United Methodist Church reaffirm its renouncement of the foregoing, but they now have prescribed penalties for those who do not adhere to these rigid rules.

For the first offense--a formal rebuke and loss of privilege. For the second offense--excommunication. Just as the disciples would be "put out of the synagogues" for following Jesus, those in the Methodist Church will be "put out" of the Methodist Church for following Jesus. In spite of the fact that history appears to be repeating itself, I still thank you, Jesus.

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## Peace

Saturday, April 27, 2019

### John 16:16-33

*"I have said this to you, so that in Me you may have peace." - John 16:33a*

Here again, Jesus warns the disciples of impending persecution as the price for belief in Him. He tells them that they will be "scattered." But He tells them not to worry because the worldly powers have been (and will be) conquered by Him.

A thought comes to mind. At my age of 70+, I often feel like I am (and we are) running out of time. I have learned patience in fishing, hunting, and bird watching. But my desire for some of the worldly powers to be conquered by Jesus grows stronger by the day. Here's where I am not patient. I'm done with wars and persecution and discrimination and hunger and on and on. I want Jesus to step on-stage and fix it. I continually lose sight of the fact that I am part of the solution. My job is to perform simple acts of love daily.

The Holy Spirit is there for me, just as He was for the disciples. I am asked to *listen*. Thank you, Jesus (TYJ).

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