



Daily Meditations

March 9-14, 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:

Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things in heaven and on earth. Mercifully hear the supplications of your People, and in our own time grant us your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Not Saying God is a Chicken

Monday, March 9, 2020

Psalm 57

*I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings
Until the disaster has passed. - Psalm 57:1b*

One of our most popular church songs refers to "eagle's wings." It has a haunting melody and paints many beautiful pictures, including one of eagles soaring high in the sky. There is something exalted in that image.

When I read this psalm with its reference to "the shadow of your wings," I do not see eagles. I see Rhode Island Reds. For you city folk, that is a breed of chicken with beautiful rusty red feathers, a nice round body that lays gorgeous brown eggs and makes a very soothing clucking sound. They look soft and warm. If you hid under their wings, the world would take on a rosy glow.

The psalm is referring to God. Be careful now, I am not saying God is a chicken. I am saying that in a disaster, I would prefer those wings to the wings of an eagle. All this is entirely beside the point, which is that God will give us refuge in time of disaster. If you have not had occasion to test this theory, consider yourself blessed. But do believe it--if you know this truth before disaster sneaks up on you, it will comfort you and give you strength to face the day...any day.

The Niggling Voice Knows

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

Psalm 62

*Put your trust in him always, O people,
Pour out your hearts before him, for God is our refuge. - Psalm 62:9*

Some mornings when the alarm rings, don't you want to just turn over, pull up the covers, and go back to sleep? Sorry! Denial is not the answer. Neither is diversion or postponement. That niggling vice that lives there inside somewhere knows. You will spend all our energy shushing it instead of getting the job done. We all know this; it's no secret, yet we all do it from time to time.

The psalmist suggests a better idea. He indicates we should pour out our trouble, whatever it is, to God and seek refuge and resolution in Him. No doubt

it is better to start the day with a heartfelt trusting prayer than with a stolen cat-nap.

I'm sure the psalmist was not thinking of an unruly child, an overdue mortgage payment or a feeble parent when he wrote those words, but the principle is transferable. God is not going to pay your mortgage, but He could enable you to see ways you could improve your financial position so that you could manage it. He could suggest new ways of dealing with your child who probably is as unhappy as you are.

Sometimes we don't recognize God's hand. God can touch us through any media--the written word, music, a child's voice, a smell that triggers a memory, a scene that brings tears, almost anything if we look for it.

Give it a try. We have absolutely nothing to lose and everything to gain.

How to Avoid the Trap

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Psalm 72

*For he delivers the needy when they call,
The poor and those who have no helper.
He has pity on the weak and the needy,
And saves the lives of the needy. - Psalm 72:12-13*

"If you take the Bible as a whole, there is overwhelmingly more attention paid by God to the plight of the poor, the needy, the weak, and the oppressed than there is to the issue of individual salvation." That comment by a professor of Old Testament has stayed with me for many years.

It seems that when we worry about our own salvation, we are focused just on ourselves. It's that's where we put our energy, we're in danger of falling into the trap of spiritual pride, worrying about who's in and who's out. It's amazing how often in a "spiritual" discussion the question arises, "What about those people? Are they saved too?" I'll let you fill in the blank about who "those people" are--the list of potential candidates is long. There is something in human nature that makes it so attractive to compare ourselves to others--to judge whether we are smarter, richer, more powerful, or more "spiritual" than others. So our egos become consumed with measuring ourselves by comparisons.

What's the best way to avoid the trap of self-preoccupation? Follow the advice of the psalmist: Reach out and help someone else, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, the grieving. It's amazing how much less overwhelming our own problems seem when we reach out to help someone whose troubles are larger than our own.

Who Does the Fixing?

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Psalm 74

Rise up, O God, and defend your cause. - Psalm 74:22

Some days when I see pain and suffering and injustice all around, I feel like crying with the psalmist: "Rise up, O God, and defend your cause." I know He can do it. He who made everything that is can do whatever He chooses to do. I know this, but I also know His ways are mysterious, beyond my capacity to understand. Nevertheless, based on our history together, I believe He knows what is best and His concern is deeper and wider than mine.

My most profound wish is that His cause would prevail and the whole earth would be blessed with peace and justice and love. I wish I could say "God, just fix it." But that would be like asking my mother to do my homework because she can, and it would be so much easier for me.

He has not chosen to do that. I guess it means there are better methods...He really meant it when He said, "Feed my sheep."

God will not Desert Us

Friday, March 13, 2020

Psalm 69

*Answer me, O Lord, out of the goodness of your love,
In your mercy, turn to me.
Do not hide your face from your servant
Answer me quickly for I am in trouble. - Psalm 69:18-19*

"God, help me. I am in big trouble this time." When we are this desperate, it helps to know that God is listening and will not turn His face from us.

There might be no easy or comfortable way out of our dilemma. Deliverance might not be possible. One thing we can count on: No matter the circumstances, God will not desert us. He will go with us, step by step, all the way to the end.

Sometimes we wind up in places we did not choose. That can be good, or very difficult. No matter, remember we are not orphans. We are children of God. He loves us and will not leave us.

True Reform Begins at Home

Saturday, March 14, 2020

Psalm 27

*I am still confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
In the land of the living. - Psalm 27:13*

What a remarkable statement! Can you honestly say that? I look for signs of God's goodness, but some days it is hard to see. I'm not talking about my life or community. I see God signs everywhere there. In a global context, I find it harder.

I know that what we see does not depend entirely on what the world calls "reality." We see what we are conditioned to see, what we want to see, what our mind and emotions and history will allow us to see.

After an earthquake in Haiti or a hurricane in Puerto Rico, we see people all over the world moved by compassion to send millions of dollars to help devastated people. Some even go in person to shovel the debris, feed the hungry, soothe the dying, tend the sick. I see that as God's goodness flowing from the hearts and hands of His children to help their desperate brothers and sisters.

It is my hope that someday we will move from crisis relief to systemic reform to the end that no nation is so ravaged by rapacious self-interest that its people decimate their forests for firewood and collect scrap to make shelter. I know that is a tall order, complicated and difficult, but it is possible.

As always, true reform begins at home. That is a huge challenge in itself. We have plenty of room for reform right here in the USA. There is much to ponder but the goodness of the Lord will not be made manifest out of a golden cloud. It will arise from the vision, compassion, and hard work of God's people. Who are they? You and me!

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