



Daily Meditations

August 3-8, 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 13

Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Word as Flesh

Monday, August 3, 2020

John 1:1-18

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

Today's reading is the prologue of the Gospel of John and some of the most beautiful language in the Bible. If the Gospel of John had a mission statement it would be to tell the world who Jesus is, even more than what he did and said. In good literary fashion, John starts with a summary. He realizes that his audience includes Jews and Greeks, so John chooses a word (Word) that both will know. To the Greeks, Word (logos) goes beyond the spoken word to include the unspoken word, the reason that rules all things; to the Jews, the Word is the creative utterance—in Genesis, God speaks and the world comes into being.

In these first verses, John tells us that Jesus is fully divine, making Him a "pre-existent" presence, there in the beginning. In the words of the Nicene Creed: "begotten, not made, of one being with the Father." And He is fully human, "became flesh," the embodiment of God, or as the Creed says, "He came down from heaven...and was made man." John tells us his purpose of writing the gospel: "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)

And in a sense, the Word can still become flesh—ours.

Following the Wrong Leader

Tuesday, August 4, 2020

John 1:19-28

"I am not the Christ."

John is the fun one to cast in the movie. The role begs over-acting, like Charlton Heston in *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. John wore "haircloth" and ate locust and honey. He preached a fiery message—"You brood of vipers!...do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham." (Luke 3:7-9) He preached social justice—"The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." (Luke 3:11) All four gospels quote Isaiah 40:3 when referring to John: "A voice of one calling: in the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God." And Mark links him to Malachi 3:1 "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me."

John the Gospel Writer emphatically tells his readers that John the Baptist is not the Messiah; Jesus is. During John the Baptist's life and after his death, he had a following of disciples separate from those of Jesus, and John goes to lengths to tell them they are following the wrong leader.

I need to hear the message of both Johns because I sometimes find myself following the wrong leader.

Perfect for You

Wednesday, August 5, 2020

John 1:29-42

And he brought him to Jesus.

"You just have to meet him!" My sister-in-law was almost breathless on the phone. "Come for dinner Friday, and I'll introduce you." Rita was sure she had met a man who was *perfect* for me and couldn't wait for us to get together. Rita's instincts were right, and the introduction was a good one. That man and I were married three months later, and we will spend a lifetime together.

Andrew had a similar moment when he met Jesus and wanted his brother to meet him, too. Now my husband is no Jesus, but Andrew's enthusiasm is similar to Rita's. If Andrew could have taken Jesus' hand and dragged him home to meet Peter, he would have done it. "Look who I found," I can hear him saying to Peter. "You have to meet my friend Jesus!"

Wouldn't it be great if we could reclaim some of Andrew's enthusiasm and say to a brother or sister, "You have to meet my friend, Jesus. He's perfect for you!" Maybe they would spend a lifetime together.

10 Seconds

Thursday, August 6, 2020

John 1:43-51

"Nazareth? Can anything good come from there?"

I was skeptical. The search committee had chosen an organic chemist from New York as the next president of the university. I would be working for this man. "A chemist? New York? This is never gonna work!" Once I met him, it took all of 10 seconds for him to win me over. We worked together for 13 years, and I was his biggest fan.

Nathanael has similar misgivings, and it took Jesus about 10 seconds to win him over. "Rabbi, you are the Son of God," Nathanael declared after meeting Jesus.

Nathanael is mentioned only in the Gospel of John, and usually in the company of Philip. He is thought to be the same person as Bartholomew, who is mentioned only in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts and always in the company of Philip. Nathanael recognizes who Jesus is, and Jesus recognizes Nathanael: "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." Jesus tells Nathanael, "You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man," a reference that will make an Israelite think of Jacob's dream of wrestling with God and seeing angels ascending and descending a ladder to Heaven. Jesus is telling Nathanael that he is the new link between Heaven and earth.

Philip introduced Nathanael to Jesus and let Jesus take it from there. We could learn from that: All we have to do is make the introduction!

Worthy Wine

Friday, August 7, 2020

John 2:2-12

"Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

This is the familiar story of Jesus' turning the water into the wine at the wedding at Cana. It is an example of the "replacement" stories that John uses to show us who Jesus is, and it is found only in the Gospel of John. Jesus replaces the water used for washing the feet of the guests with the best wine any of the guests have ever drunk. And it is more plentiful than the guests can possibly drink.

Jesus takes something ordinary and turns it into something spectacular—like He takes the bread of the Eucharist and turns it into "the bread of heaven" and the wine into "the cup of salvation." Jesus takes the water of our ordinary lives and turns it into wine worthy of praise and salvation."

Caution: We have been given wine; let's not allow it to turn back into water.

The Intentional House of Worship

Saturday, August 8, 2020

John 2:13-25

"How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

Jesus was furious. These merchants were turning a house of worship into something it was never intended to be. Shame on those old money-changers! We certainly would never do that.

Perhaps over the centuries the money-changers have changed costumes in our churches. They became instigators of wars, murderers of "infidels," slave traders and much more. Within our lifetimes, they have become advocates of partisan politics, supporters of discrimination, protectors of child abusers. Shame on us. *We* have tried our best to turn our houses of worship into things they were never intended to be.

But our churches live on (it's gotta be grace!). Most of them are trying their best to be a place that Jesus would claim.

We can never drop our guard and let the money-changers take over. We want St. Stephen's to be a house of worship that Jesus would claim.

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