



Daily Meditations April 29-May 4 , 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, Dave Boyd, 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 2:

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Pascal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Cynicism Sobriety Monday, April 29, 2019

1 John 1:1-10

"If we claim that we experience a shared life with him and continue to stumble around in the dark, we're obviously lying through our teeth--we're not living what we claim. But if we walk in the light, God himself being the light, we also experience a shared life with one another, as the sacrificed blood of Jesus, God's Son, purges all our sin."

If there were a group called Cynics Anonymous, I'd be a charter member. I admit it: I struggle daily to keep my healthy skepticism from turning into sour, dark cynicism. I'm not sure how many days of "cynicism sobriety" I could ever claim, but it's an ongoing process.

Perhaps some of you struggle with this as well. In my case the questioning and thought provocation I was taught by my parents and several influential teachers was intended to spark curiosity and intelligent inquiry. That it did and does, and I'd have to say that my insistence that truths be demonstrable and make sense has served me pretty well overall.

Stoked by the realities of life, with the disappointment of false friendships and the bitter flavor of deceitfulness sometimes cynicism has reared its ugly head and had its way with me for a time. I have found that only confession and walking purposefully in the light in communion with the Source of all Truth can assuage my shortcomings with any certainty. Turning away from the darkness and embracing the light, I find myself in God.

In the Redemption Business

Tuesday, April 30, 2019

1 John 2:1-11

"Anyone who claims to live in God's light and hates a brother or sister is still in the dark. It's the person who loves brother and sister who dwells in God's light and doesn't block the light from others. But whoever hates is still in the dark, stumbles around in the dark, doesn't know which end is up, blinded by the darkness."

Know someone who is hard for you to love? Sure you do. It's practically a universal experience among Christians to feel the compelling scriptural direction to Love One Another and not be able to do it, at least some of the time.

I was once wronged by a member of my own church and wrestled almost daily with the feelings I had about him. He had publicly defamed and insulted me, and I was nearly consumed by my desire for justice. Strong words, but, yes, I hated him.

It was not until I read this scripture in my Bible readings that I realized my hatred was the huge sunshade between myself and God, and that it was blocking God's light from others as well. First, I prayed for the desire to forgive him and give up my need for justice to be done. That went on for awhile. Then I prayed for God to heal me and show me His mercy and His light again. Since God seems to be in the redemption business pretty much full-time, that's exactly what happened. Thanks be to God!

Getting Outside of One's Self

Wednesday, May 1, 2019

1 John 2:12-17

"Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world--wanting your own way wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important--has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out--but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity."

Some of the best life advice I ever got was from a dear friend who was active in the AA program, and he insisted this was probably the answer to most of the world's problem. Whenever he found himself in the grips of extreme self-centeredness, which he described as the root of alcoholism, the only way out was for him to go out and do something for someone else, preferably for someone who could not do something for him in return.

Getting outside of myself and clearly seeing the things that really matter in our world requires this action. Perhaps you are involved in the outreach ministries or engage in active service with the Community of Hope. Maybe you prefer to anonymously donate your time, money, and resources to a Godly cause.

I commend this activity to all of us, not just as a good thing to do for the betterment of mankind--although it probably is that--but as a means of finding our real selves, framed in real things that really matter, in intimate and conversational contact with the Lord.

Truth to Life

Thursday, May 2, 2019

1 John 2:18-29

"I haven't been writing this to tell you something you don't know, but to confirm the truth you do know, and to remind you that the truth doesn't breed lies."

A friend and I had a healthy, friendly, but pointed discussion recently about whether a just end could be accomplished with unjust means. That particular discussion was about torturing prisoners, but the Truth that Jesus brought us is much larger than that or any other single issue.

The New Testament finds many ways to bring this truth to life, but they all arrive at the same conclusion: Good fruit comes only from good vines, and bad fruit comes only from bad vines. Never the twain shall meet.

When our lives present us with ethical questions of this sort, the scriptures often have lots to offer us in the way of guidance. Whether at work, in the voting booth, teaching our children, or serving our community, God's Truth is always good and never, ever, breeds lies, darkness or vanity.

Enough Evidence to Convict?

Friday, May 3, 2019

1 John 3:1-10

"Here's how you tell the difference between God's children and the Devil's children: The one who won't practice righteous ways isn't from God, nor is the one who won't love brother or sister. A simple test."

A popular question posed in Christian circles a few years back was this one: "If being a Christian was a crime, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" *Thought-provoking, yes?* When I stray from the path of living in the Light--and I do so with disturbing regularity--the way I perceive myself and the way I appear to the world around me is part of the conviction that brings me back.

Is it evident in my lifestyle that I am a person of faith and integrity? Do I speak of others in a harsh or loving tone? Do I reach out with a generous hand to people and causes put in my path? Do I share the Light of God's Love? Is my life an example of generosity, honesty, and charitable living?

May God have mercy on me, a sinner, and bring me to his loving arms.

Rinse and Repeat

Saturday, May 4, 2019

1 John 3:11-18

"This is how we've come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed his life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God's love? It disappears. And you made it disappear. My dear children, let's not just talk about love;

let's practice real love. This is the only way we'll know we're living truly, living in God's reality. It's also the way to shut down debilitating self-criticism, even when there is something to it. For God is greater than our worried hearts and knows more about us than we do ourselves."

I think this has been one of my favorite passages of scripture since my childhood, mostly because it seems to distill the most essential Biblical truths into such a short paragraph.

Jesus himself said the same things, and they are echoed throughout the New Testament: "Love God. Love your neighbor. Rinse and Repeat." If there's a more succinct path suggested in the scriptures to the Kingdom of God, I cannot think of it.

We expend untold energy, lives, time, resources, and words trying to formulate the Word's teaching to fit our phenomenological mold, but I can almost hear the exasperation in Jesus' unvoiced addendum: "Why does this seem so complicated for you?"

Let's try to act like Jesus. Love God. Love everyone. Really.

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