



Daily Meditations

July 06-11, 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 9

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Uproar

Monday, July 06, 2020

Psalm 1,2,3

"Why are the nations in an uproar?" - Psalm 2:1

I write the first week in June, and yes, the nations are in an uproar. Did you ever imagine a time like this? I surely didn't. The COVID-19 virus has caused us to miss meeting and worshipping together in person and is a threat to our very lives. As if that weren't enough, several recent incidences have brought to light the overt and covert racism that still lurks in our land. Then there is the current political rhetoric. Enough said!

Perhaps we're not so wise in our modern age as we thought. Perhaps this is a time to return to the ancient wisdom of the Psalms. Bishop and scholar Tom Wright, in *The Case for the Psalms*, tells us "the Psalms offer us a way of joining in a chorus of praise and prayer that has been going on for millennia."

So today we begin the reading cycle with Psalms 1, 2, and 3. If you follow along, starting on page 975 of the Book of Common Prayer, in seven weeks you will have read each Psalm and be ready to begin again. I wonder if this habit might be a subtle way to relieve some of the uproar in our community, our world, and our hearts. After all, this is the prayer book that Jesus knew.

Hearken

Tuesday, July 7, 2020

Psalm 5, 6

"Hearken to my cry for help, my King and my God, for I make my prayer to you." - Psalm 5:2 BCP

Hearken (pronounced harken) is an archaic word for listen. In Psalm 5 we find a cry for help, a cry to be heard. Isn't this just where we find ourselves today--crying out in a time of uncertainty and despair?

Our dear Bishop Reed has been attentive to us in these troubled times. You may have read his recent letter following the death of George Floyd. He several times repeats the words Jesus used when he greeted his disciples after his resurrection, "Peace be with you." Reed goes on to say, "when hope becomes hopeless then comes the Christ." We may feel hopeless and discouraged, but here comes Jesus saying, "Peace be with you."

I wonder if daily reading and hearkening to the Psalms might create in us a peace that we would then carry into our daily lives, into the world. This "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) can be ours through Christ Jesus. And Bishop Wright tells us the psalms "will renew us from head to toe, from heart to mind. After all, this is the prayer book that Jesus knew.

Law

Wednesday, July 8, 2020

Psalm 119:1-24

"With my whole heart I seek you; let me not stray from your commandments." - Psalm 119:10 BCP

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm, thus we read it in sections. This great Psalm in praise of God's law is considered a wisdom Psalm. And just what is that law that is given such high acclaim by the psalmist?

In a familiar Gospel story (Luke 10:25-28) a lawyer tries to test Jesus, and Jesus answers this test with his own question. "What is written in the law?" the lawyer correctly answers: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind;' and, 'love your neighbor as yourself'." He is quoting the ancient verses of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. This is the law we hear being praised in Psalm 119.

Bishop Wright says of the Psalms, "They are God's gifts to us so that we can be shaped as his gift to the world." Our own Bishop Reed suggests, "we should turn outward and say to the community beyond our walls, 'the Peace of the Lord be always with you'." I wonder if regularly reading and pondering the Psalms might bring us closer to keeping this great law of our Lord God? After all, this is the prayer book that Jesus knew.

Delight

Thursday, July 9, 2020

Psalm 18:1-20

*"He brought me out into an open place; he rescued me because he delighted in me." -
Psalm 18:20 BCP*

It's sometimes hard to believe, but it's true. "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so." He delights in us, in each and every one of the beloved made in his own image.

I read a story in this morning's "Austin American-Statesman" about the interaction between downtown protestors and Austin Police Department (APD) officers. A group of officers knelt along with protestors outside APD headquarters. The plan was to kneel for eight minutes and 46 seconds, but the shouts and heckles of a second protest group cut short the effort at solidarity. Sgt. Lawrence Davis, a member of the community engagement team, is quoted as follows: "What I commit to you is to hear you. I hear you with the ears of my heart." Now I don't know where Sgt. Davis heard the term "ears of my heart," but I know it as the opening words of the Rule of St. Benedict written in the 6th century. "Listen carefully, my child...and attend with the ear of your heart."

I wonder what this kind of listening to the Psalms might mean. Might it change the way we listen to one another? Perhaps it would teach us to know God's delight in us so we can delight in each other. After all, this is the prayer book that Jesus knew.

Trust

Friday, July 10, 2020

Psalms 16, 17

*"My heart, therefore is glad, and my spirit rejoices; my body also shall rest in hope." -
Psalm 16:9*

Psalm 16 is such a beautiful Psalm. My hope is that you will read and savor it, so instead of adding words I'll just excerpt a few. Look for them as you read. These words tell us who our Lord God is:

our refuge,
our good above all other,
our portion and cup,
our counselor,
the one at our right hand.

Therefore:
we shall not fall,
our hearts are glad,
our spirits rejoice,
our bodies rest in hope,
we will not be abandoned,
we will know the path of life,
and have fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

In these trying times we can trust, we can hope in our Lord. Please read Psalm 16 again. After all, this is the prayer book that Jesus knew.

Victory

Saturday, July 11, 2020

Psalms 20, 21

"Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will call upon the Name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall down, but we will arise and stand upright." - Psalm 20:7-8 BCP

Psalm 20 is a prayer for victory and Psalm 21 a thanksgiving for victory. The Hebrew people who wrote the Psalms were looking toward that day of victory, the promised day when "the wolf will dwell with the lamb" (Isaiah 11:6), when YHWH will bring justice and make all things right again. According to Bishop Wright, the Psalms tell the "story Jesus came to complete. the story of the creator God taking power and reigning, ruling on earth as in heaven," and "sorting out its messes and muddles, its injuries, its injustices, once and for all."

We live in a now but not-yet kingdom and messes, muddles, injuries, and injustices are plain to see. I wonder if regular reading of the Psalms might help us to do our part in sorting out the uproar. Can we listen to others and follow the law of love? Can we delight and trust in our Lord and know that he has the victory in hand? I hope so, because after all, this is the prayer book that Jesus knew.

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