



Daily Meditations April 15-20, 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 Holy Week:

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Press On

Monday, April 15, 2019

Philippians 3:1-14

"I want to know Christ--yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." - vv. 10-12 NIV

Paul writes his letter to the Philippians while under a two-year house arrest in Rome. I hear Paul putting on a bright face, struggling to hang onto his courage and confidence in the face of his trials and challenges. He does this by hanging onto the first principles of what he knows about himself and his understanding of who Christ is.

I write this letter to you while still acutely experiencing the grief at the death of my daughter and, in that grief, loss of joy and confidence in my faith. Yet still, I find *I want to know Christ*, and I still *press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me* (v. 12). Hence, I'm still writing to you today.

I encourage you to join me and, as Paul encourages the Philippians: to remain in community; to remain faithful to what you have known; and remain open to discovering what the future may hold. Amen.

Make Clear the Truth Eventually

Tuesday, April 16, 2019

Philippians 3:15-21

"[I]f on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you."
-v. 15 NIV

I tend to be more comfortable with divergent and unorthodox thinking than Paul. He exhorts all of his followers to believe as he believes.

While Paul and I may think differently on some points, God will make clear the truth eventually. Likewise, you may think differently than I think on some points. God will make clear the truth eventually. Until that time, let us hang onto, and strengthen the support, community, and love we have already attained as members of the Body of Christ. Amen.

In the Moment Now

Wednesday, April 17, 2019

Philippians 4:1-13

"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." - vv. 11-13 NIV

It sounds like Paul has learned the lesson the Buddha teaches, that suffering comes from attachments to the past or the future, contentment comes from living in the moment now. When I live in the moment now, with my grief for the loss of my daughter, I feel sadness and loneliness, and I feel joy at knowing that I have had a life that included her. I could call this contentment but certainly not happiness.

Jesus' mission and purpose was to make the Kingdom of God visible and present in this moment now. In the lyrics to Sara Grove's "Just Showed Up for My Own Life," she sings, "The Glory of God is man fully alive." I believe we make visible and present the Kingdom of God when we live fully in the moment now, and there we find contentment.

Communion's Community

Maundy Thursday, April 18, 2019

1 Corinthians 10:14-17, 11:27-32

"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf." - vv. 10:16-17 NIV

"[W]hoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord." - v. 11:27 NIV

In my adolescence, I used to abstain from taking communion out of some immature piety; I believed myself unworthy to come to the table because I was a sinner.

I find so many things wrong with that theology now. I reject the identity statement "I am a sinner." Instead, I assert that I am a creation of God who sins, and loves, and succeeds in doing some good, and fails at some attempts to do good.

We don't come to the Table because we are worthy. We come to the table to transform the world, to come together as the community that forms the Body of Christ, the community that makes visible and present the Kingdom of God now. We don't do it alone. We do it supported by and supporting that community around the table.

After Death

Good Friday, April 19, 2019

1 Peter 1:10-20

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care. Trying to find out the time and circumstances...Even angels long to look into these things." - vv. 10, 12

My daughter and I had conversations before she died about how we had no idea what happens after our death. Many of us, and I imagine all of us, have wondered; Some may even claim to know. Peter tells us that the Prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures wondered when Salvation comes. Many of us have been taught Salvation comes with an after-death resurrection of our body.

I believe I teach the teachings of Christ when I teach that Salvation comes with living in the Kingdom of Heaven, and that we like Jesus have a mission to make that Kingdom visible and present now in our lives and the way we live in community.

I'll leave what happens after our death to God.

Spirit of God

Holy Saturday, April 20, 2019

Romans 8:1-11

"You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed Spirit of God lives in you." - v. 9 NIV

I write to you today, on the last day before Easter Sunday, where we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ. I hope I work in the realm of the Spirit, and it is up to you to decide if the Spirit of God lives in me.

I wrote the following sonnet describing my experience of writing these meditations and devotions. After I sent a copy to my Bible professor, Dr. Michael Floyd, he responded with this comment:

"I'm struck by the implied analogy between a dead interpretation of scripture coming to life and the death of Jesus rising into the living presence of God."

That reflects my experience. I hope my writing helps lead us all into the living presence of God.

*With dread I approach these verses Holy
Approached through circles hermeneutical.
Worlds 'fore, behind, of, the texts. If only*

*Mining, not my, but Thy words scriptural.
The banal received interpretation,
These old verses, boring and pathetic,
Living Word lifeless from repetition,
Yet we're told all Scripture speaks prophetic.
I discover life when I remember
Orthodoxy begins with God dying
Lonely, tortured, broken on those timbers;
His life, teaching, example, death, rising
Make visible and reveal the presence
Of the reign of God here in the present.*

- Jay Nickel, May 2017

Connect with us

