



Daily Meditations

December 2-7, 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: 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, ADVENT 1:

*Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.***

God with Skin on

Monday, December 2, 2019

[2 Peter 1:1-11](#)

Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God.

Advent is an invitation to get to know "personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God." God wanted us to know who God is to show us God's nature--what better way than to send us a living, breathing, human like us but like God? Someone who can walk with us, argue with us, put an arm around us when we need it. Someone who can show us what Love is really like. God with skin on.

That One gives us "everything that goes into a life of pleasing God." The writer of this epistle tells his readers that their salvation is sure that their past lives are "wiped off the books." He tells them, "So, friends, confirm God's invitation to you, His choice of you. Don't put it off; do it now." This letter resounds with the hope and the urgency of Advent. As it was in Peter's time, so it is in ours. The promise is faithful: "Do this, and you'll have your life on a firm footing, the streets paved and the way wide open into the eternal kingdom of our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ."

In this season, come Lord Jesus.

The Rising of the Morning Star

Tuesday, December 3, 2019

2 Peter 1:12-21

The prophetic Word was confirmed to us. You'll do well to keep focusing on it. It's the one light you have in a dark time as you wait for daybreak and the rising of the Morning Star in your hearts.

Have you ever had a crisis or dilemma or doubt of your faith where you felt in the dark? I have. In those times, it helps me to rely on one bedrock belief: that somehow the Holy Spirit (or the Word) will see me through it as I "wait for daybreak."

Our writer is saying something similar to the church. The writer is probably not Peter. The letter was not even ascribed to Peter until the third century.¹ The author of the letter was probably a disciple of Peter who appealed to Peter's authority to uphold the traditional faith. "False teachers, who have recently entered the community, were undermining the traditional faith, so the writer uses Peter's authority to remind the readers of what Peter taught and how Peter would have spoken to the issues had he still been alive."² 2 Peter is one of the seven "catholic epistles" (James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John and Jude), meaning "universal"--they were intended for the whole church, unlike Paul's letters that were destined for a particular congregation or person. 2 Peter is probably the last writing of the New Testament, definitely written after Jude because 19 of Jude's 25 verses are incorporated into 2 Peter.²

Christians in the letter's first audience were facing challenges that we face today: How to hang onto our traditions and remain true to them while expressing these beliefs in the language and context of a new culture and time. Advent is a good time to look at our traditions and seek to express them to today's world as we await "the rising of the Morning Star in our hearts."

¹NIV text notes

² *Education for Ministry*, Year 2, University of the South, 4th edition, 2000, page 477.

Something from Nothing

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

2 Peter 3:1-10

...long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

The 2011 drought seemed like it would never break. Day after day the temperatures soared over 100 degrees, the river dried up, our "lawn" of native grass turned crispy brown. But then the rain did come, and where the native grass had been, a carpet of green ground cover sprang up. Once again, God was bringing forth something from what seems like nothing.

God is good at that, bringing forth stuff from nothing. God seems to like using little things or impossible things or hopeless situations to create great things. Like making the earth from water, to which Peter refers. Or ground cover from dirt. Or bringing the savior of humankind from an unlikely peasant girl in a repressed corner of the Roman Empire.

God is a God of new things, a God of endless possibility. That means that all of us have meaning and possibilities beyond our present circumstances. It's a good thought to ponder during Advent: What small thing do I possess that

Would You Live Any Differently?

Thursday, December 5, 2019

2 Peter 3:11-18

"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat."

We restless teenagers sat in a hot Sunday School classroom at my fundamentalist church in West Texas, listening to our teacher talk about the "fear of God." At one point he asked us: "Why are you a Christian?" and he waited for each of us to answer. After we had all said something, he said, "Well, I'll tell you why I'm a Christian. Because I'm afraid not to be."

Even in my 15-year-old mind, that didn't sound like a very good reason. To my teacher, the "fear of God" meant knee-knocking, sweat-palm-producing fear, and it was a long time before I came to see the "fear" of God as the "awe" of God. But he and others in our church were quite fond of the hellfire-and-brimstone passages like these in 2 Peter.

When we got home from church, I told my dad about the conversation in Sunday School. He said, "Well, honey, you have to ask yourself--if you found out for sure that hell *didn't* exist, would you live any differently now?" And today I ask myself, "If you knew that hell *did* exist, would you live any differently now?"

Our focus during Advent is the coming of Christ. He comes in our hearts, our family, our community, our world, and our end times. Come, Lord Jesus.

One of the Shortest Books in the Bible

Friday, December 6, 2019

Jude 1-16

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

He was a biblical scholar, a minister who spent more than 50 years preaching the Word of God before his retirement. He read and wrote Hebrew and Greek and could immerse himself for hours or days in the richness of scripture. He loved and lived the Word. And just to prove how rich this Word was, he once gave a series of 25 lessons at the Sunday night Bible study--each week on *one* verse of the book of Jude.

Jude is one of the shortest books in the Bible. Twenty-five verses, one of four books of the New Testament that are not divided into chapters. The author identifies himself as the brother of James, probably because of the prominence of James in the early church. James was Jesus' brother, which means Jude was also. So, the author is the Lord's brother or someone writing in Jude's name. Like 2 Peter, the epistle is written to challenge the false teachers who have arisen within the church. The writer refers to at least two apocryphal writings--the *Assumption of Moses* in verses 8-9 and 1 Enoch in verses 14-15-- which testifies to the fact that the early church used writings other than those that

were eventually accepted as canonical. It is a tribute to the richness that molded early Christianity.¹

Jude gives us insight into a Christian community struggling to identify itself. In some ways, we are still trying to do that. And we have a rich tradition on which to rely--a tradition that can produce 25 Bible lessons out of 25 verses.

¹ Education for Ministry, Year 2, University of the South, 4th edition, 2000, page 471.

Hope is a Way to Live

Saturday, December 7, 2019

Jude 17-25

...build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Jude's message here is one of hope. Hope--to Jude and to us--is not optimism or rose-colored glasses nor wishful thinking. Hope is a conviction based upon experience. Hope is a way to live. We know God is faithful; that is our experience. Advent's hope is a conviction that new life will be born.

I have heard it said that Advent is like Lent: In both we wait for God to "happen." Advent leads to birth; Lent leads to death, but a death turned upside down by rebirth and Resurrection.

Advent is a time to rekindle the hope whose seeds were sown at baptism. Observing Advent with prayer and hope and anticipation is to begin the new church year on an appropriate note.

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