



Daily Meditations July 8-13, 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, Pat Gillory, 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.

How to Re-establish Credibility

Monday, July 8, 2019

Acts 9:19b-31

"Back in Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. They didn't trust him one bit. Then Barnabas took him under his wing. He introduced him to the apostles and stood up for him, told them how Saul had seen and spoken to the Master on the Damascus Road and how in Damascus itself he had laid his life on the line with his bold preaching in Jesus' name. After that he was accepted as one of them, going in and out of Jerusalem with no questions asked... - vv. 26-28a

I wonder how many of us would still speak our minds as boldly as did the apostles if there were people in every town who were conspiring to kill us because we disagreed with them. Paul's predicament is doubly vexing because he is vilified from both camps: those who hated him for his Christian teachings, and those Christians who feared him because of his past.

My friend Floyd had a hard time being taken seriously in the business world due to his years of infamous drinking adventures. His years of sobriety did finally add up to good reasons to trust and respect him, but in the meantime, he lost many sales to people who knew his former reputation as a drunk and a womanizer. Bad reputations are as difficult to live down as good ones are to establish.

The apostle Paul and Floyd both called upon the same power to re-establish their authenticity: Jesus Christ. There is power, amazing power in His very name.

Tuesday, July 9, 2019

Acts 9:32-43

*"She opened her eyes. When she saw Peter, she sat up. He took her hand and helped her up. Then he called in the believers and widows, and presented her to them alive."
- vv. 40-41*

I have been that girl. I have been Tabitha. I have lost my connections to things that matter, and my loved ones have mourned over me. I have been all but dead.

Like every sinner, what I need in my life is not personal perfection, for which I have neither natural talent nor inclination, but a source of perfection that can reliably cleanse me and set me on right paths. The love and faith of those around me can nurture me and raise me up, but only the Holy Spirit can find me and bring me home in one piece.

Let us be to one another as Peter was with Tabitha: praying with expectation, boldly proclaiming life, lifting one another up into wholeness in faith.

Go and Look for Jim Bob

Wednesday, July 10, 2019

Acts 10:1-6

"The angel said, 'Your prayers and neighborly acts have brought you to God's attention. Here's what you are to do. Send men to Joppa to get Simon, the one everyone calls Peter. He is staying with Simon the Tanner, whose house is down by the sea.'" - vv. 5-6

I sometimes grieve that God's direction does not seem quite this crystal clear to me. While God's direction is often easy for me to figure, Cornelius here has a much more direct message from God through an angel who appears to him in the middle of the afternoon. Perhaps the time setting of the story was significant because it suggested his vision was neither a middle-of-the-night dream nor the result of drunken revelry.

Is it true that God used to communicate more directly with His people or did those people just have a broader and more trusting understanding of God's messages than do I? Hmm.

If a friend came to my house in the middle of the afternoon and said, "Go to Llano and look for Jim Bob. You'll most likely find him whittling on a bench in front of the hardware store. I think he might have some stories you need to hear," would I acknowledge that friend as an angel carrying a message from God? Maybe I would.

God speaks in many ways. May our eyes and ears always be open to His leading.

God-given Change of Heart

Thursday, July 11, 2019

Acts 10:17-33

"So the minute I was sent for, I came, no questions asked." - v.29a

The scriptures must be full of this kind of response to God's call for a reason. With the faithful answering with phrases like, "Here I am, Lord, send me," it's hard to miss the message. When we are called to God, a response is apropos.

I have come to understand that God can change hearts--mine in particular--if I agree to pray about an opportunity to serve Him. A task that seems distasteful and unappealing can become one's passion with a God-given change of heart. The precedent problem is having the willingness to even pray about it. Sometimes I find myself just trying to be in a prayerful frame of mind to allow God to give me the inclination to pray about something.

In any case, know this the next time God seems to be calling you to a ministry or other task: If God is calling you, and you pray willingly for the gifts you need to fulfill the task, He will give you all you need. And more.

Suspicion

Friday, July 12, 2019

Acts 10:34-48

"It's God's own truth, nothing could be plainer: God plays no favorites! It makes no difference who you are or where you're from--if you want God and are ready to do as he says, the door is open. The Message he sent to the children of Israel--that through Jesus Christ everything is being put together again--well, he's doing it everywhere, among everyone." - vv. 35-36

At this particular time of the 21st century in our country, there is a dearth of polite public discourse. Civil disagreement has become an art form whose hallmark is the demonization of those with whom we disagree, and abject suspicion of anyone of a different ethnic, political, social, or racial background. It's not a new problem.

The Jews in this story are as suspicious of Cornelius and his friends as Americans were of persons of Japanese descent during World War II. Their relationship with the occupying Roman military was as uneasy and complicated as ours is today with new immigrants, legal or otherwise.

God doesn't seem to have this problem. His love and offer of Salvation extend everywhere, to everyone. Whites and blacks, gay and straight folks, Mexicans and Ugandans, men and women, Republicans and Democrats--all are distinctions not recognized by the Lord as worthy of note except to celebrate our diversity.

His love and salvation are open to every human, and our job is to make that known: ***Whoever you are, and wherever you find yourself on the journey of faith, you are welcome at St. Stephen's!***

Ain't Nuthin' I Can Do About Them

Saturday, July 13, 2019

Acts 11:1-18

"When Peter got back to Jerusalem, some of his old associates, concerned about circumcision, called him on the carpet: 'What do you think you're doing rubbing shoulders with that crowd, eating what is prohibited and ruining our good name?'" - vv.2-3

"When you're committed to doin' the Lord's work, sometimes your best friends can be your worst enemies." - my friend Floyd

Floyd had more experience with being part of "that crowd" than the "in crowd." Years of alcohol and drug abuse had left him with a wealth of experience and little else. Jesus Christ and AA made him a new man, and he spent that time telling his story and spreading the Gospel.

I was talking with him about a small church in San Antonio with which I had a long time friendship. Their community had changed slowly over the years, and it was now primarily a Spanish-speaking neighborhood. The pastor painstakingly, and sometimes painfully, brought most of the congregation along with the idea that they should begin holding a Spanish service every Sunday as well. It was a difficult change for many who had been members for decades, but answering God's call to take the Gospel out to their world, nearly all of them came around and agreed.

Not all of the churches Floyd visited where he testified to the life-changing power of the Gospel, were as welcoming as that one. Grumbling about whether this notorious drunk had, in fact, changed his ways followed him all the days of his life, but he took it in stride: "Ain't nuthin' I can do about them," he'd aver in his thick East Texas drawl, "the Lord asked me to go where He'd send me and that's what I'm doin'."

God's Kingdom has room for every soul in the universe, and He does not need our help in selecting the faithful. We bring them--God changes them. Let us be a part of spreading the Gospel's message of Love and Grace in welcoming them.

Connect with us

