



Daily Meditations May 6-11, 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 3:

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Who Does He Think He Is?

Monday, May 6, 2019

Luke 4:14-30

"No prophet is acceptable in his own country." - Luke: 4:24

Luke picks up the story just as Jesus leaves the wilderness, having been tempted by Satan. Jesus heads for Galilee to begin his work, teaching in the synagogues. When he came to Nazareth, the town where he grew up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath as his custom was.

When it was his turn to read from the Torah, much as we read lessons from our Bible on Sunday, they gave him the scroll of Isaiah to read. He found and read the passage saying, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has sent me to preach good news to the poor..." The worshippers spoke well of him until he began to teach them using the old proverb "no prophet is acceptable in his own country" and reminded them that God had sent both Elijah and Elisha to places and people that were not Jewish.

When they hear this, they rose up in wrath, mob psychology took over, and they ran him out of town, intending to kill him. What a humiliating debut in his old home town!

What does this say to us? One thing it might be saying is that we tend to be impressed with people from "the big city" or with "a big name" and fail to recognize the prophets who live and walk and talk among us. Contrary to public opinion, familiarity should not breed contempt but the honor and respect due every person. Respect does not necessarily imply agreement. It implies respect for the humanity of the other, not blind acceptance.

What Do You Call It?

Tuesday, May 7, 2019

Luke 4:31-37

"Be silent and come out of him." - Luke 4:35

When Jesus was in the synagogue in Capernaum, he met a man possessed by a demon with an unclean spirit and commanded the demon to come out of the man. These stories about casting out demons always disturb me because they are so different from our current ideas of what might be happening. It's not that I don't believe it. I just don't understand it.

That might sound a bit weird, but I think about it. I believe a lot of things I don't understand. Maybe you do, too. I don't really understand what keeps the earth, sun, moon, and planets in orbit so that we don't have a big crash every few years. There are scholars who do understand that phenomenon and could explain it to us. My belief that I am safe from a planetary collision is based on the fact that I have experienced many years of their safe trips. About the only thought I give to that situation now is an occasional thanksgiving that the schedule is still working. But, I still don't understand it.

Luke and I live in very different worlds. If he were writing this story today, he might use psychological terminology to tell us what happened. I have finally reached an age where I don't have to understand what I believe. That is not senility, although some might argue the point. I call it faith. *What do you call it?*

Why Am I Here?

Wednesday, May 8, 2019

Luke 4:38-44

"For I was sent for this purpose." - Luke 4:43b

Although the people begged Jesus to stay on with them, he told them he could not because he was sent to teach others also. He knew his purpose and was true to it despite their pleas.

Can you state the purpose of your life in one simple declarative sentence? I don't think I can. Does it bother you that you are not entirely clear on this question? If you are like most of us, it hides there, just beneath the surface 24/7.

Each person's answer is unique because each person is unique. Our gifts, our responsibilities, and our courage are our own and no one else's. This is a pretty basic question, and it will never go away. You can refuse to look at it. You can divert yourself from it, sometimes by being very busy doing good deeds. Or you can wrestle with it, as Jacob wrestled with the angel and was changed forever.

No one can do it for you. You are stuck with it. So maybe this is a good time to devote some time, some solitude, some prayer, meditation, or perhaps consultation with your Lord who always is waiting for you. He is wise and patient. He will wait while you stumble around looking for the right words. He won't pat his foot or drum his fingers. He will just be there with you, loving you and encouraging you to be braver and more honest.

That doesn't sound very scary, does it?

Sopping Wet

Thursday, May 9, 2019

Luke 5:1-11

Jesus said to Simon, "Put out into the deep." - Luke 5:4

Jesus' friends were exhausted. They had fished all night and had caught nothing, not a single fish. Jesus, now in the boat with them, suggested they put out into the deep. They did and the nets began to break because they were so full of fish. The fishermen were astonished and filled not one but two boats with their catch.

What caught my eye in this story was not the number of fish they had caught, but Jesus' suggestion that had made all the difference. The story doesn't tell us, but I wonder if they had been unsuccessful earlier because they were fishing in shallow safe waters. The big catch was found in "deep waters." Perhaps Jesus' presence gave them courage to move out into the deep that held not only fish but also danger.

I'm not much of a fisherman. I panic when I lose sight of the shore, and I definitely am not fond of deep water. It has scared me ever since my brother held my 7-year-old head under water too long on a family outing. My father rescued me, but I never lost the fear of that moment.

When the Lord asks us to take our feet off the bottom and move into the deep water, it feels a bit like I did that day long ago. Several times I have been asked to do things I was sure were beyond my capacity. I found that if I would just do my preparation and then lift my feet off the bottom, I would float and reach safety and success. Each time I was able to do that, I found it was easier the next time. I discovered gifts that I did not know I had; my confidence and capacity grew.

The next time the Lord invites you into the deep water, whatever that may be, trust him and you will find that he is right there with you, just as my father was when he pulled me out of the water sopping wet.

Strange Things

Friday, May 10, 2019

Luke 5:12-26

"Amazement seized them all and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, 'We have seen strange things today'." - Luke 5:26

Many days I could say, "I saw strange things today," sometimes in person, sometimes electronically. Some days my reaction is amazement, occasionally awe, but rarely glorifying God. These people had just witnessed a miracle. Jesus healed a paralytic whose friends had brought him to Jesus in hopes he could be cured. The crowd was so dense they could not get through, so they climbed up on the roof, removed some tiles and let the man down through a hole in the roof and laid him before Jesus. He was healed and arose and walked home.

This is the first Bible story I remember from my days in Sunday School when

we all sat in a circle on our tiny chairs and listened to the teacher tell us the stories. The very best part was that when we left to go home, the teacher gave each one of us a small card with a picture of the story on one side and the words on the other. The picture always was in beautiful colors, and we could keep it. This was in the days when the world was still mostly black and white, and that picture was a treasure to a 4-year-old.

So, I grew up in a world where miracles were part of life and very believable. It wasn't until decades later, when I was all grown up, semi-educated, and full of hubris that this story seemed strange. When I was little, it just sounded wonderful. It has taken even more decades and a lot of work to get back to that child-like state because I had to sort through and evaluate all the worldly wisdom I had accumulated and discard the worthless.

I hope I have come full circle and can stay here, but that probably won't happen as life is always in a state of flux. What makes that a blessing instead of a curse is the fact that our God is alive, not static, and walks right into the flux with us. That does evoke amazement and awe and even glorifying God.

The Old is Good

Saturday, May 11, 2019

Luke 5:27-39

"No one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, 'The old is good'." - Luke 5:39

No question about it. This is not an American proverb. In this country we tend to admire the new, the innovative, "what is hot off the press" (a phrase rendered obsolete by the internet). Those attributes are admirable, but do not eclipse the value of the tried and true. Our tendency is to go overboard and toss out the baby with the bath water. It seems to me that both history and personal experience indicate that balance is better than "overboard."

Now that the concept of "old" has become personal instead of a theoretical possibility, this resonated with me. I don't think I am speaking from a prejudiced personal view, although you never know for sure. Having been both young and old, I have experienced both ends of the time line. I agree with Jesus. Old is good. It is very different, but very good. I have no desire to be 25 again.

There is one thing about this that I would like to see change. Viewpoints of young and old are so different for so many reasons, but we have so much to share and to learn from each other. The historical perspective and experience of the elders could be helpful to younger ones if we could learn to be patient and listen to each other. The energy and courage of young people are sources of amazement and admiration to elders. We elders need to be more open and patient and learn to share our insights, not infallible solutions. Our lives, all of them, could be so much richer and rewarding if we could master this trick.

You young guys, do you think old is good? You old codgers, do you think old is good? What do you think?

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