



Daily Devotionals January 7-12, 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, Janice Bachardy, Pat Gillory, Frances McMaster, Jay Nickel, Bob Reed, and T. Cay Rowe.

Click on the scripture reading for each day to go directly to link.

COLLECT for THE EPIPHANY:

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the People of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Freed Indeed

Monday, January 7, 2019

Isaiah 52:3-6

"Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I." - Isaiah 52:6

The Israelites, who have been enslaved and oppressed by Egyptians and Assyrians, are to be released from captivity by the Babylonians. Then Isaiah prophesies that they will know God's power and presence. The "New Exodus" is about to begin.

"Bondage" is a strong word, but it may be appropriate to our own captivation by an idea or perspective or prejudice. My father was a contractor who built homes and commercial buildings. Over the years I spent countless hours and dollars dreaming over house plans for the house my husband and I would build. It was not to be!

When I finally let go of that desire, I was free to love the home we had chosen and to thank the Lord for his provision. And I was freed to be more in the present moment and open to new things. My "New Exodus" had begun.

From Generation to Generation

Tuesday, January 8, 2019

Isaiah 59:15-21

"And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouths of your children, or out of the mouths of your children's children, says the Lord, from now on and forever." - Isaiah 59:21

Here Isaiah speaks in a particular way of the covenant relationship with his chosen people. A covenant is established by God and reveals his purposes in regard to his relationship with all of us who are his children. Isaiah refers in this passage to God's intention to speak truth by his Spirit through his people from generation to generation.

God's covenants are everlasting, and so here we are in the umpteenth generation, "blessed to be a blessing" and empowered by the same Spirit

both to hear and to speak God's word. That is awesome to consider. I am believing that God loves to speak to us more than we love to listen.

Remembrance

Wednesday, January 9, 2019

Isaiah 63:1-5

"For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redeeming work had come." - Isaiah 63:4

In this passage God speaks in righteous anger to the rebellious Israelites. They had forgotten to remember that he is God and that he has saved them from their oppressors. *How many times a day do I forget to remember his saving grace?*

Living mindfully is a matter of passing through the day with an attitude of alertness and gratitude. Using as a guide book such as *Seven Sacred Pauses* by Macrina Wiederkehr is most helpful. She says, "Living mindfully is the art of living awake and ready to embrace the present moment." This is a centuries-old practice, a way to put out the "welcome mat" for God's grace.

Chosen for What?

Thursday, January 10, 2019

Isaiah 65:1-9

"I was ready to be sought out by those who did not ask, to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am, to a nation that did not call out my name'."
- Isaiah 65:1

By the time this passage was written, the Israelites had returned from exile in Babylon, and the disciples of Isaiah, known as Third Isaiah, were proclaiming both judgment and redemption. Some of the people who had remained in Judah had kept the Law, and some in exile had continued to practice circumcision, keep the Sabbath, and read or recite the Torah. Isaiah berates the unfaithful but reveals God's intention to draw others to himself. I can imagine how the Jews felt about God's revealing himself to others—then and after Jesus' death.

Several years ago a relative brought her children and a friend to celebrate Christmas Eve supper and church with our family. The friend was unkempt and a little drunk. I remember my initial reaction very well (feeling somewhat violated). I think some of the Jews felt like that in Isaiah's time when God was generous with himself to others. It became apparent that we were called to hospitality of a new kind for us, and our hearts were warmed. It was an unexpected "teaching moment."

Forgiving and Forgetting

Friday, January 11, 2019

Isaiah 65:13-16

"The former troubles are forgotten and are hidden from my sight." - Isaiah 65:16b

After proclaiming his displeasure with his chosen but disobedient ones, God declares that he will forgive and forget. Our God keeps his promises, is trustworthy and forgiving. My desire is to be like that too, so I'm finding this passage and others like it very comforting.

I remember an instance when I visited with my spiritual director and declared that I had forgiven so-and-so, and he replied that he could see that I wanted very much to forgive so-and-so, but that I had not in fact done so. He was right. So, I went away to pray and work some more on that. Finally, I was able to forgive. I did not forget the circumstances, but I forgot to be unforgiving—and also knew that I was forgiven for holding a grudge. *What a relief!*

Blessed to be a Blessing

Saturday, January 12, 2019

Isaiah 66:1,2,22-23

"But this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word." - Isaiah 66:2b

One is reminded of Jesus' words: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). When my work was with young children, I experienced God's love for them. When my work was with the poor, I experienced God's love for them. And when I was involved in the healing ministry, I experienced God's love for those seeking healing. It's amazing: those who humbly seek are blessed, and so is an imperfect instrument.

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