



Daily Meditations ***September 21-26, 2020***

The Biblical readings are taken from the Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer for Year 2 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, PROPER 20

Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Finding Guidance

Monday, September 21, 2020

Luke 1:1-4, 3:1-1

With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. - Luke 1:3-4 NIV

As I write these meditations, horrific things are happening in our country: fires on the West Coast, civil unrest everywhere, political division, and of course, the coronavirus.

As followers of Jesus, we, like Luke, return to our sources to try and figure out how God calls us to respond to the world in its evil and brokenness.

I don't find the certainty that Luke promises Theophilus. Jesus taught an oppressed people living under Roman domination. We live in the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world. I suspect most of my readers, like me, live in comparative comfort and privilege.

So, how do we find guidance in Scripture? We start with the death of Jesus and the resurrection. We try to be followers of Jesus, imitators of Christ. For me that means searching for a loving, life-giving, self-giving, and non-violent path.

Lord, lead us and give us the strength to follow.

Claim Our Baptism

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

Luke 3:15-22

"I'm baptizing you here in the river. The main character in this drama, to whom I'm a mere stagehand, will ignite the kingdom life, a fire, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He's going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He'll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he'll put out with the trash to be burned." - Luke 3:16-17 The Message

Water cleanses, fire purifies. Water quenches, fire transforms. John baptizes with water. The one to follow baptizes with the Spirit and with fire.

John encourages his followers with the promise that someone much greater than John is coming who will transform and purify those who follow Him.

Jesus came to John and claimed His own baptism, and the Holy Spirit came to Him with the message that He is beloved and pleasing to God.

Let us claim our baptism and know that we are beloved and pleasing to God, and let that Spirit purify and transform us.

Reject the Temptation

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

Luke 4:1-13

For 40 wilderness days and nights he was tested by the Devil. - Luke 4:2 The Message

Jesus begins His ministry by going into the wilderness, the desert, for 40 days to discern how to execute His ministry. He was tested with the desire to satisfy His hunger through extraordinary acts of magic. He was tested with the desire to use political and military power to address the problems of the world. He was tempted to prove to the world that He was special to God. But He refused all of these temptations.

We too are called to reject the temptation of self-gratification and to instead seek a full life informed by a ministry of love, healing, and resisting oppression.

We too are called to reject the temptations of seeking answers through political power and military might—to resist what Walter Wink identifies as the Satanic temptations to use violence and coercion to achieve our ends. Instead, we are called to find non-violent, non-coercive means of loving, healing, and resisting oppression.

We too are called to reject the temptations of being spectacular and instead are called to humbly love, heal, and resist oppression.

Spiraling Downward

Thursday, September 24, 2020

Luke 4:14-30

*"God's Spirit is on me;
he's chosen my to preach the Message of good news to the poor,
Sent me to announce pardon to prisoners and
recovery of sight to the blind,
To set the burdened and battered free,
to announce, 'This is God's year to act!'" - Luke 4:18-19 The Message*

This year our country has become more aware of the unjust cycle of poverty and oppression suffered by people of color in this country and especially African American men.

The cycle goes something like this:

- Crime rates are high in low-income neighborhoods. People of color disproportionately live in these high-crime, low-income neighborhoods.
- Police focus on these high-crime areas with the intention of reducing crime. Intrusive stop-and-frisk tactics are used to discover infractions. No-tolerance policies are followed, leading to arrests and deaths. Sometimes infractions are misdemeanors like skateboarding on the sidewalk.
- Once arrested and charged, the people arrested are responsible for court costs. When poor people can't or don't pay those costs, felony arrest warrants are issued. The next encounter the person has with law enforcement results in arrest.

The pattern continues and spirals downward.

We too are called to do justice and love kindness (Micah 6:8) This too is God's year to act. Let us find loving and just ways to heal our systems and our people.

Follow His Non-Violent Example

Friday, September 25, 2020

Luke 4:31-37

All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What words these are! With authority and power, he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!" - Luke 4:36 NIV

All the commentaries I read (*New Interpreter's Bible*, Matthew Henry's *Commentary*, The IVP *New Testament Commentary Series*) agree that Luke's purpose in relating this story is to show Jesus' authority over the forces of evil.

When we embrace the gift of our Baptism, we too, as participants in the Body of Christ, have this authority over the forces of evil.

As I continue to seek to follow Jesus' example and teaching, that means to follow His non-violent example as well. That seems to suggest using our words to confront and rebuke the powers.

Let us not remain silent in the face of injustice, cruelty, and evil. Let us use our words to name it and rebuke it in our mission to resist oppression.

Putting Jesus in a Box

Saturday, September 26, 2020

Luke 4:38-44

At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. - Luke 4:42 NIV

The people seeking Jesus wanted to keep him for themselves and use Him for their own needs and purposes. Jesus has bigger things and more people to take the message to.

I recognize that my passion for a non-violent, peace theology may blind me to some of Jesus' message, and I too may be putting Jesus in a box where He won't stay.

Let us pray the Holy Spirit continues to open our minds and our hearts as we work to become a follower of Jesus and an imitator of Christ. Amen

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