



Daily Meditations December 16-21, 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 3:

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, we honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

Jesus Comes to Me (and You) Monday, December 16, 2019

Matthew 24:15-31

"The arrival of the Son of Man isn't something you go to see. He comes like swift lightning to you." - The Message

Jesus is talking to his disciples in all of these passages. He is using Old Testament scripture to point Himself as the Messiah, since the disciples are good Jews who have heard these passages many times before. There is much discussion here of the "end times," which I have great difficulty subscribing to or understanding. Taken literally, many of these verses just don't fit my guiding beliefs about Jesus, but then a great deal of the Bible should not be taken literally at all. However, there are some snippets herein that I will try to discuss.

In the quote above from Matthew 24, I like the notion of Jesus coming to me-- even perhaps coming for me. The only real way I can imagine going to Jesus is in the present -- in reverencing the Christ in a granite formation, a live oak tree, a Great Blue Heron, a sunset, or another human being. In this respect, I can experience the Christ today, and for as many tomorrows as I have left. I believe it is my responsibility to do a good job of that reverencing -- to appreciate the opportunities that abound to do a good job in His name. Sometimes I'll fail, but I'll try again.

As far as any belief in an afterlife is concerned, most of you who know me, understand that I am conflicted by the concept. I think it will be more than "good enough" for me if on that last of my days, He dispatches an angel to me simply to deliver this message: "The Boss says to tell you that you did a pretty good job most of the time, and for those times that you didn't -- you are forgiven." Thank you, Jesus. TYJ

When Will the "Last Day" Come?

Tuesday, December 17, 2019

Matthew 24:32-44

"No one knows that, not even heaven's angels ... You have no idea when the Son of Man is going to show up." - The Message

Jesus is again foretelling the "end times" in his continued discussion with the disciples. He is again referencing the Old Testament stories that his disciples are very familiar with -- like the story of Noah and the great flood.

My own end times are much more poignantly important to me presently than any Old Testament pseudo-historical account. At age 71, I have a sense of it now, whereas in times past, I could not have imagined it. It does not seem distant now. I do not mean to state this in a morbid way -- rather in a mortal one.

I will try not to "carry on" as usual as did those who ridiculed Noah and did not expect a flood. Instead, I will try to do the best I can to do what is right. When I fall short -- and I will fall short -- I will try again. Here comes that little WWJD plastic bracelet again. He helps me try. TYJ

In Charge of the Kitchen

Wednesday, December 18, 2019

Matthew 24:45-51

"Who here qualifies for the job of overseeing the kitchen? It should be a person the Master can depend on to feed the workers on time every day." (whether the Master is present or away) - The Message

I am a man who likes being in charge of the kitchen. I am in charge of it at the deer lease, but not at home. The kitchen is shared turf at home.

I know that there are many "kitchens" out there that Jesus would like me to manage or help manage. You don't have to look very far in our church or in our community to find some. I use many excuses to avoid such roles. I tell myself and others that I am finally retired, and it's time for some other, younger folks to step up and take the reins. But in my heart, I know that those other, younger folks are quite overwhelmed raising kids and working 50-60 hours a week trying to make ends meet. I tell myself and others that I am a much better Indian than I am a Chief so that I don't have to take on, or share, a leadership role.

The truth is, I am quite selfish with my time, and I am quite daunted by the prospect of taking on some new and unfamiliar managerial task. Henceforth, I will try to do a better job of serving in the many unfamiliar kitchens of our church and our community. TYJ

The Bridesmaids and their Oil

Thursday, December 19, 2019

Matthew 25:1-13

"Our lamps are going out, so lend us some of your oil.' They answered, 'there might not be enough. Go buy your own'." - The Message

Here is yet another parable given by Jesus to the disciples (similar to the foregoing scripture) charging them to be "ready." He tells them that they do

not know when the end will come. I don't know about you, but at this point in my writing, I'm growing just a little bit weary of reading and writing about end times and whether or not I will be ready when they come. So, I will choose to write about oil and locked doors. It might detract from the message that Jesus was trying to communicate to the disciples, but oil and locked doors have plenty of meaning for me.

I believe that Jesus would have us share our oil with our fellow bridesmaids, whether or not they were "foolish" as the Message Bible describes them. He would not (I believe) have us tell them to "go buy your own."

And what about those doors being locked to the wedding feast keeping out the bridesmaids who were late because they sought more oil? Jesus doesn't lock any of us out of the feast. We are all welcome at his table. Besides, most Episcopalians are never on time for the feast anyway!

Okay, so I took a parable and turned it on its head. Sobeit. TYJ

Investing the Resources of the Master

Friday, December 20, 2019

Matthew 25:14-30

"To one he gave five thousand dollars, to another two thousand, and to a third, one thousand -- depending on their abilities" - The Message

It's time for me to turn another parable on its head. Instead of a story about the judgment and condemnation of the Master in the story, let's look at the words of the Master before he left on an extended vacation. He gave His resources to each according to each one's "abilities."

In my opinion, the Master got exactly what He expected and exactly what He deserved. Those with greater investment acumen ("abilities") produced a greater return. The one with the least ability was the most careful with the resources entrusted to him in order not to lose any of it.

I know a thing or two about being cautious with the limited resources of my own. Right now, it is the time of year for my family to have a look at our saved resources and to take the pulse of our assumptions about the family's future. At age 71, and not being known for superior investment acumen, this family is known to err on the side of capital preservation.

I can certainly relate to the cautious third servant. TYJ

Sheep and Goats

Saturday, December 21, 2019

Matthew 25:31-45

"Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was Me -- you did it to Me." - The Message

Here, again, is a passage infused with judgment and condemnation. I choose to focus on the deeds of the sheep and not upon the judgment and condemnation of the goats by the King. Here is what was said that we are all familiar with:

*"I was hungry, and you fed me.
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.
I was homeless and you gave me a room.
I was shivering and you gave me clothes.
I was sick and you stopped to visit.
I was in prison, and you came to me."*

We Can Do This!

Do you know how badly Crisis Breadbasket needs donations of food and money? Could you help Camp Good Sam feed children over the summer months? What about Habitat for Humanity? Could we help out there with hammers or saws or dollars? And have you looked in your closet lately? Isn't it time for you to take your undeniably excess clothing and footwear to the Senior Center? What about helping the sick or infirm by visiting them in Deer Creek or even in their homes -- just to listen and demonstrate that you care? And can we please not turn our backs on those imprisoned -- adults and children -- those guilty and those innocent. Jesus would have mercy.

Is it time to see the face of Jesus in the face of others? TYJ

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