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## ***Daily Meditations***

### ***November 16-21, 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.*

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## **COLLECT, PROPER 28**

*Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of eternal life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen*

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## **Do You Hear Moses and the Prophets?**

*Monday, November 16, 2020*

### **Luke 16:19-31**

*If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead. - Luke 16:31*

The rich man in this parable, suffering the torments of hell, wanted to send a warning to his brothers still on earth so they could avoid his fate. He asked Father Abraham up in Heaven to send Lazarus down to earth to warn them. (Remember, this is a parable.) Father Abraham refused, saying that if they would not believe the teachings of Moses and the prophets, they would pay no attention to a messenger risen from the dead.

Abraham essentially is saying, "How much warning do they need? God's message is clear and consistent. They know the message; they just choose to disobey." The problem is not ignorance of the law; it is disobedience. I don't know about you, but that message hits pretty close to home with me. I cannot claim ignorance. I am left with hubris, ego, and the many other ordinary traps we humans are prone to stumble into.

Self examination comes first. I must see the impediment, whatever it is, then claim it as mine, ask for forgiveness and the will and strength to make it right (atonement in churchy language).

Then I wait to see how God wants me to work it out with him. It sounds a little

scary, and it is because we are not in control, but it is the only thing that works. God will do his part. The question is: Will you and I do our part?

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## Little Jack Horner

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

### Luke 17:1-10

*We have only done what was our duty. - Luke 17:10b*

Some of you younger folk are probably saying right now, "Who in the world is Little Jack Horner?" But many of you will remember him as an inhabitant of Mother Goose Land, the smug little boy about whom it was said:

*Little Jack Horner sat in a corner  
Eating his pudding pie.  
He stuck in his thumb,  
Pulled out a plum  
And said  
Oh, what a good boy am I!*

When I look at him, I want to pinch his fat little cheeks, but when I see him in me, I am quick to explain why I feel that way.

I am afraid this failing is pretty common among church folk, including myself. Many of us have "worked in the church," as they say, for much of our lives and have done many tasks, menial and important, over a span of many years. Most of us do it because we want to, because we can, because we feel called to do so, because it makes us happy.

But sometimes, when things are not going well, or Father Time begins to dog our steps, or we just feel unloved and unappreciated for any of a 1,000 reasons, this cloud begins to form over our heads. We find ourselves thinking, much to our surprise, "They don't know who I really am. They don't remember how much I have done around here. They don't appreciate me." Maybe you have not done that, and I hope you haven't, because it does not feel good. But I have done it, and not so long ago either. It really surprised me when I realized it, as I don't normally think that way.

Writing this meditation on this parable is a blessing for me as it reminds me that whatever I have done was not for approbation but because it was my duty that I performed out of love and not for praise. Don't let yourself fall into that trap—for that's what it is, a trap.

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## As They Went

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

### Luke 17:11-19

*And as they went, they were cleansed. - Luke 17:14b*

As Jesus approached the village, he met a group of 10 lepers standing at a distance, calling out, "Lord, have mercy on us." He responded by telling them to go and show themselves to the priest. Custom required all lepers to show themselves to the priest after they were healed to be certified "clean." They did not hesitate, or quibble, saying "We are not yet cured." They took off immediately, confident they would be healed. And as they went, they were

cleansed.

They believed in God's power to heal, not in their right to be healed. Their request was in accord with God's will. They did not ask for special signs or omens. They believed and they acted. And in their acting, they were healed by God's power to heal, not by the power of their request.

God wants us to do our share. Life on this earth is a joint effort. The fulfillment of his will here requires our participation. We are on the scene. He will help, but we must act.

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## A Sure Bet

*Thursday, November 19, 2020*

### Luke 17:20-37

*And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together." - Luke 17:37*

The Pharisees were asking Jesus when and where the kingdom of God was coming. He answered them, but not in the terms they wanted. They were fishing for signs and omens so they could be sure to be ready when the time came. He reminded them that Noah had been warned of the flood but was not told when it would come. So, Noah got prepared and when the flood came, he and his family were ready.

Jesus gave them no clues except to say that it is surely coming so be ready. If he had lived in the Texas Hill Country, he might have said, "It is coming as surely as the swarm of vultures will lead you to the carcass of the deer." The NIV picture of a gathering of eagles is more poetic, but for us a swarm of vultures hits closer to home.

Essentially, he was saying, "Get ready and stay ready so that whenever that day comes you will welcome the Lord with joy." Pretty good advice!

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## Do Not Lose Heart

*Friday, November 20, 2020*

### Luke 18:1-8

*And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily." - Luke 18:6-8a*

This parable is very unusual in that it gives us the point before it tells the story. Most of the time the point is not enunciated specifically but is made by the story itself. Maybe Jesus wanted to be sure we got the point this time.

The crooked judge in this story is by far the more powerful character, but the focus is on the old woman, a nagger, almost a Shakespearean character. We don't know what her request was, but it was important to her because she persisted in her prayer day after day after day. The judge was not so interested in justice; he just wanted to be free of the nuisance and said so. He granted her request just to get rid of her. Not good judicial practice, but she got what she wanted. The point of the parable is not to emulate the powerful judge but the persistent woman.

The first verse of this passage spells it out. Verse 1: "And he told them a

parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not to lose heart." There it is, in black and white, clear as crystal. Do not give up. Do not lose heart. He will answer your prayer although he might not always give you what you ask for. In the process, you will grow closer to him and your request might even change. Jesus recommends it. It must be pretty good advice.

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## Two Worlds

Saturday, November 21, 2020

### Luke 18:9-14

*But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." - Luke 18:13*

If you don't think we live with our feet in two worlds, think about this parable for a few minutes. If these two men, the pharisee and the tax collector, were having a job performance interview, which one do you think would get the raise and promotion? Not much doubt about it. Number 2 would be branded a "loser with no self esteem" and Number 1 would be praised for self confidence and initiative and given a boost up the ladder of success.

The trick is to reconcile the demands of the two worlds if you can and to never confuse the two. It is very hard to pull off, and many people can't manage it. It involves some very difficult choices and when other people, especially spouses and children are involved, it gets really complicated. If we could jump from one world to the other, it would not be so hard, but we have to live in both simultaneously. That is a real challenge. It is one all of us face every day. It is not easy and is one more reason we need to pray for each other.

There is no formula. Every situation is unique. I can guarantee Wall Street does not have the solution. I believe the best plan is to pray for God's guidance, act on our understanding of it, and leave the outcome to him. That probably will not result in a fat bank account, a big house or a fancy car, but it could bring us peace of mind, a calm spirit, a loving heart. Does that sound like a fair exchange?

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