



Daily Meditations

June 29-July 4, 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 8

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Reaching the Boiling Point

Monday, June 29, 2020

Psalm 106:1-18

Both we and our ancestors have sinned; we have committed iniquity, have done wickedly. - v. 6

Well, this verse hits me like a thunderbolt! As I read through the readings for today, I began to draw some parallels with what is happening in our country now.

In today's Gospel reading from Matthew, Jesus is causing quite a commotion by throwing the moneychangers out of the Temple, some might say vandalizing the place. He wanted to get people's attention, and he did. He reached his boiling point and sought to demonstrate how badly he believed things were going.

Today's psalm is titled "Confession of Israel's Sins" in the New Revised Standard Version. Time and after time in the Hebrew Scriptures, the people turn against Good, embrace Evil, see their mistakes, and are changed. Wash, rinse, repeat.

Seems to me we have reached a boiling point, which has led to masses of people all over the world joining protests and calling for change. We are being shown how badly things are going for many of our fellow citizens. We and our ancestors have sinned.

But the Scriptures also show us that it's never too late to see what we have done and change. I believe our nation is being called to repentance.

Let Us Go to the House of the Lord

Tuesday, June 30, 2020

Psalms 121, 122, 123

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!" - v. 122:1

Don't we all want to see these words again! They are written--painted there by our own Carroll Dolezal--above the entryway to the "big" church. Seeing them again together will mean, we hope, that we can worship together as we used to. We can greet one another and share the Eucharist and be sent from there to do God's work in the world.

In the meantime, though, "we're all in this together," as they say. We are invited to virtual church, to "TAKE 5" with host Allen Hennig, to do yoga with Carla Daws, and to Zoom with Fr. Phil. We attempt to reach out to one another with regular phone calls, newsletters, and daily meditations. These are creative responses to our isolated situation, but it's just not the same.

We all will be very glad when "they" say to us, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

Homesick

Wednesday, July 1, 2020

Psalm 119:145-176

I'm homesick, God, for your salvation. - v. 174

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm, the longest chapter in the Bible--176 verses. It is acrostic, 22 eight-line stanzas, each set beginning with one letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is written in the wisdom tradition and in praise of God's law: God's law is a blessing, never a burden, and leads to true happiness.

Psalm 119 is post-exilic, meaning that it was written after the Israelites had been taken into exile by the Babylonians, and then allowed to return home by Cyrus, the Persian king who had defeated the Babylonians. The psalmist has experienced exile, the feeling of separation from God, and is grateful for his return to God and God's laws. To him, that is salvation.

Isn't that our story, too? To experience salvation is to experience a return from exile, a connection or reconnection with God, to walk the way of the wilderness that leads from Babylon to God. Indeed, Lord, we are homesick for your salvation.

Joy is Like...

Thursday, July 2, 2020

Psalms 131, 132, 133

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! - v. 133:1

After these words, the psalmist tries some similes for joy. He describes oil dripping over a man's head and the dew of Hermon; these don't really ring true today. But it's a good exercise to imagine "Joy is like..." What makes us happy? Rain after a drought. Bluebonnets in the spring. My 3-year-old grandson's laugh at discovering a doodle bug.

When our kids were growing up, we had a piece of poster board printed to a door, and whenever one of us would think of something that made us happy, we

wrote it on the poster. I wish I had kept it (maybe I did in some nook and cranny!), but I do remember that "Superman" and "Wyoming" were on it.

In these seemingly endless days of separation, maybe I'll pin another poster board to the door...

What on Earth is He Doing Up There?

Friday, July 3, 2020

Psalms 140, 142

Let God pile hellfire on them, let him bury them alive in crevasses! - v. 140:10

Some of these extreme "sic-em" passages in the psalms used to bother me. I wondered how these extreme rantings could be in the Bible, this love-one-another book. But the thing I really love about the psalms is the passion of the psalmists, good and bad, and the writers' ability to express feelings that are in my own heart--gratitude, sorrow, wonder, desperation, mystery and yes, anger. So, here is anger. The psalmist knows that he can express his anger to God.

There is a wonderful scene in "The Apostle," an old movie about an East Texas evangelist starring Robert Duvall. A visitor comes to the house, and the Apostle's wife is calmly sitting in a rocker downstairs while screams and curses are coming from the bedroom upstairs where her husband is. The visitor asks, "What on earth is he doing up there?" And the wife says, "Oh, he's praying."

I think that's what our psalmist is doing. I can hear a loud, raised, mad voice here; a Gregorian chant of this psalm just doesn't cut it. Saying it solemnly and antiphonally in Morning Prayer is even a little weird.

In all likelihood, God didn't "pile hellfire on them" as the psalmist asks. But God listens. And like the psalmist and the Apostle, we can say anything to God.

Precursors to a Better Creation

Saturday, July 4, 2020

Romans 8:18-25

All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. - v. 22

This is an interesting reading for the Fourth of July. We are definitely in difficult times of pain, around us and within us. COVID-19 and protests in our streets and calls for elimination of divisive cultural symbols. It's difficult to see these as "simply birth pangs." (And any woman who has had a baby might argue with the adverb "simply!") But maybe they are signs of the Spirit of God arousing us within. Maybe they are precursors of a better creation being born.

I believe our Founders did the best they could at the time in forming "a more perfect union." But we have been seeking a more perfect union ever since 1776. It can still be our goal, and the Fourth of July is a perfect time to say so.

Connect with us

