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## ***Daily Meditations***

### ***December 14 - 19, 2020***

*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, Jon Campbell, Becky Denton, Pat Gillory, Jay Nickel, Bob Reed, and Carroll Wilson.*

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

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### **COLLECT, Advent 3**

*Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation; give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

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### **A 21st Century Meal**

#### ***Monday, December 14, 2020***

#### **Luke 22:39-53**

*"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, yet, not my will but yours be done."  
- Luke 22:42*

Jesus had just, along with his disciples, celebrated the meal we know as the Last Supper. And he gave them a hint about what this meal would mean to people through the ages and to us today in the 21st century.

Now he faces his death with knowledge of the pain he will bear and the darkness he will know, all for the sake of the world. We even see him, as he prays, sweating blood. Try to picture this image. The disciples are struggling to understand the meaning of all of this, as they don't yet comprehend that the message of Jesus is peace and love, peace and love enough for the whole world, for all of us.

At this critical moment Jesus' faithfulness to the divine will is fully embraced. In the context of this strenuous prayer, he is giving us an example that we all can follow. We live with the uncertainty of not knowing how our concerns and fears will be resolved, yet we are taught to pray that God's will be done. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Sometimes we have to live without answers or with resolutions that seem entirely wrong. Lord Jesus, remind us that you are with us and you intercede for us. Remind us that in the fullness of your kingdom "all shall be well."

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## Say You Know Him

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

### Luke 22:54-69

*"The Lord turned and looked at Peter." - Luke 22:61*

Let's step into the story. We may find what is happening here is familiar. It's a well known Bible passage, but it may also resonate in our very own lives. Here is our dear Peter, willing to follow Jesus at a distance. That is until he is called out, not once but three times: "this man also was with him," "you also are one of them," "surely, this man was also with him."

This was just too much for Peter, far too risky. Do we ever find ourselves in this situation? We know in our hearts what God may be calling us to do, but it seems too risky, or we're too tired, or perhaps we just plain don't want to.

I think Jesus knew that Peter's humanity would get the best of him. Yet we find Jesus always ready to forgive and to call us yet again into his service. Peter's story of forgiveness and call to service begin in John Chapter 21. Here, in one of his post-resurrection experiences, we find Jesus on a beach in a fishing scene. He's fixing breakfast for his friends. Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him. Peter's reply is, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." (John 21:17). The three times is no coincidence.

Peter will go on to preach, to heal, to bring many to Christ, and to understand that the gospel story of Jesus is for all mankind. So we can certainly take heart from the story of this big fisherman, the rock upon whom the church was founded.

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## Hallelujah, He is Coming

Wednesday, December 16, 2020

### Mark 1:1-8

*"Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." - Mark 1:3*

The first 13 verses of Mark are considered a prologue to his Gospel. In this introduction, it is made clear who the hero of the story will be, that is Jesus, God's son. Mark quotes ancient scripture, uses the witness of John the Baptist and gives us a strong voice from heaven to make his point clear.

Crowds came to see the unusual prophet, John the Baptist. They came from the whole Judean countryside and all over Jerusalem to be baptized in the river Jordan and confess their sins. But John knew that one more powerful than he was coming, one who would baptize, not with water, but with the Holy Spirit. As the verse from Isaiah tells us, John was the messenger sent ahead to prepare the way.

This year we won't be able to gather inside to sing our marvelous Advent hymns. We will certainly be thankful for Anne and Allen's musical offerings. Here is the first verse of the hymn that has been stuck in my mind as I write this pre-Advent.

*"On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh; awake and harken for he brings glad tidings of the king of kings." - Hymn 76*

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## Prepare a Home

Thursday, December 17, 2020

### Matthew 3:1-12

*"Repent, the kingdom of heaven is near." - Matthew 3:2*

The story of John the Baptist is found in all four Gospels. In Matthew, like in Luke, he comes looking a bit strange, drawing large crowds, baptizing, speaking of the kingdom, and calling people to repent. What exactly does this word repent mean? I've heard that it means to turn, to turn away from certain things and turn toward Jesus. Another way to think about it is to look at the word *metanoia*, a Greek derivative. *Metanoia* can be understood as a turning of the heart, a transformative change.

John tells us that one is coming whose sandals he is not worthy to carry. This one who comes will baptize not just with water but also with fire. Can we in this Advent season turn our hearts and prepare them for this coming one, the Christ? I wonder what that would look like?

*"Then cleansed be every breast from sin; make straight the way for God within, and let each heart prepare a home where such a mighty guest may come." - Hymn 76 verse 2*

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## Jesus is the One

Friday, December 18, 2020

### Matthew 11:2-15

*"Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them'." - Matthew 11:4-5*

We have jumped in the book of Matthew from Chapter 3 to Chapter 11. John is now in prison, and he hears about all that Jesus is doing and what Jesus is preaching. All the reports that come to John point to Jesus as God's long awaited agent. So John sends his disciples to ask Jesus directly, "Are you the one who is to come?" Jesus frames his answer using the words of the prophet Isaiah; "the blind see, the lame walk, the dead are raised, and good news is brought to the poor." (Isaiah 35:5-6, Isaiah 42, and more) This is the one! He is here to restore God's kingdom by showing us, all of us, how to love.

*"To heal the sick stretch out thy hand, and bid the fallen sinner stand; shine forth, and let thy light restore earths own true loveliness once more." - Hymn 76, verse 4*

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## Our Refuge and our Great Reward

Saturday, December 19, 2020

### Luke 3:1-9

*"Bear fruit worthy of repentance" - Luke 3:8a*

Luke likes to tell the John the Baptist story with the full sociopolitical and historical context: who was in charge, who was the governor, who was the high priest, who was the emperor, and also who was John's father. That was Zachariah, another great story.

Each of the three Gospels we have looked at tells us that John the Baptist quoted the prophet Isaiah. Throughout the book of Isaiah there are many beautiful prophecies of the Messiah who was to come. George Frederick Handel liked them a lot also. Here in Luke we have a longer quote and something particularly interesting added, "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (from Isaiah 40:5).

Devout Jews had eagerly awaited a new word from God. It has come! God brings rescue and salvation precisely because he is the holy faithful God keeping his covenant with his people. There is nothing we can do to earn our God's love, but we do have a part to play. Advent is a time for examination, repentance, metanoia. Can we turn our hearts toward Jesus, accept his grace, and look at the tasks he might have for us?

*"For thou art our salvation Lord, our refuge, and our great reward; without thy grace we waste away like flowers that wither and decay." - Hymn 76, verse 3*

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