



## Daily Meditations September 30 - October 5, 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, PROPER 21:

*O God, you declare your almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity: Grant us the fullness of your grace, that we, running to obtain your promises, may become partakers of your heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

### "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God..."

#### Hymn 711

Monday, September 30, 2019

#### Matthew 6:25-34

*"Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" Matthew 6:26*

In this passage Jesus continues teaching his disciples in the lengthy discourse we call the Sermon on the Mount. He is speaking to the Twelve so that they might understand the vision for his Kingdom and pass along the message. Here we are encouraged to lift all we find ourselves anxious about up to our Lord.

These comforting words remind me of a recent car ride with two of my grandchildren. I was driving my 7- and 10-year-old grandkids home from school. When I realized we would pass right by the neighborhood where the family lived when the two were born. I asked if they would like to drive by their old house. The reply was "yes," so we quickly made a detour by the small home they lived in until they were all of 4 and not yet 2. The backseat conversation surprised me. It went something like, "Oh, I wish we still lived in that house. It was so small and cozy. Why did we move?" I chuckled to myself, then realized they were remembering a time when there seemed to be perfect protection, nothing to be anxious about, not a care in the world. After all, in 5th and 2nd grades you have homework, peer pressure, chores, and the like.

Bless the two young ones and bless us as well as we remember that God loves

and cares for us always. He will provide for us abundantly. Listen to the voice of Jesus telling his disciples -- and thereby us -- where to focus our hearts and minds. Pray with me that we may seek his Kingdom here and now. It is near! Amen.

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## **"Ask, and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find..." - Hymn 711**

*Tuesday, October 1, 2019*

### **Matthew 7:1-12**

*"For everyone who asks receives and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks the door will be opened." - Matthew 7:8*

The very familiar hymn, number 711, comes directly from Matthew 6:33 and 7:7. We bravely and heartily sing these words, and I hope with each repetition we come to more earnestly believe them. Yet it begs the question -- "ask and it shall be given to you" *Really?* So often it just doesn't seem that way. Many of us have been praying for rain as I write this on September 10, and we've just had a brief rain shower but certainly not enough. Likely all of us are praying for a positive outcome to a dire situation in our own lives or that of a loved one. We just don't seem to get exactly what we ask for. What a great conundrum, surely a universal one.

For me this brings to mind Psalm 37:4, which reads, "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." I've reflected on this verse for some time, and I think it may help us understand today's reading. Just maybe as we more and more "take delight in the Lord" through worship, prayer, fellowship, communion with nature (add your own favorite way here) our own hearts become increasingly conformed to his heart. As we, ever so slowly, allow him to change our hearts, the desires of these new hearts are also new and may be just the desires our Lord wishes to grant us. I don't know about this, but it brings me comfort; it makes it easier for me to remember not to judge others; it helps me obey the Golden Rule. Pray today that you and I may daily delight in our Lord. Amen.

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## **"They will know we are Christians by our love, by our love.."**

*Wednesday, October 2, 2019*

### **Matthew 7:13-21**

*"...you will recognize them by their fruits." - Matthew 7:16a*

What is all this about a narrow gate, a hard way and false prophets in sheep's clothing who are actually ravenous wolves? With these frightening images, Jesus is exhorting us to pay careful attention to how we act and to whom we give our ear. I imagine we've all known a false prophet or two through our experience in the church or in a secular setting. Well, like these false teachers, we, too, will be known by our fruits.

Again, I come to a story about my grandchildren. The setting is Wimberley United Methodist Church. My job for four days this summer was to cart two children to and from Vacation Bible School (VBS) with an older sibling in tow. They were not always cheerful, and, in the back seat, typical sibling spats held sway. At the end of the second day, I discovered that the key scripture for VBS was Galatians 5:22, "By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." My young ones were being taught about the fruit that a "good tree" would bear, one producing fruit to the glory of God. The car ride went much smoother the remainder of the week. I simply had to ask them to list the fruits they wanted to display. It worked!

Let us pray that the fruits of the Spirit may increasingly be ours to display to the glory of God. Amen.

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## **"Christ is made the sure Foundation, Christ the Head and Cornerstone..." Hymn 518**

*Thursday, October 3, 2019*

### **Matthew 7:22-29**

*"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." - Matthew 7:24*

As a child, my sister, cousins, and I attended summer Vacation Bible School at First Presbyterian Church with my beloved Aunt Josie as our teacher. Using songs and flannel board stories, Aunt Josie taught us about the love of God demonstrated through the life and teachings of Jesus. It all fascinated me. In today's reading Jesus tells a story of two men, one wise, the other foolish, and the house each built. Rains fell, floods came, and winds blew. Perhaps you can visualize this on a flannel board. The house of the wise one survived these catastrophes because he (or she) had heard the words of Jesus and followed.

Each of us will have times in our lives when it seems we are living in a gale wind, and for many in Wimberley this story can be taken literally not just metaphorically. And we all remember the amazing response of the Wimberley community following our horrific flood events. What a great example of hearing and following Jesus's words!

I wonder if you ever learned the song associated with this passage? The song, like the scripture, warns those listening to Jesus to take care where they place their faith, where they are rooted. I don't believe I'm never too old to look at this lesson again and renew my childlike wisdom. "The wise man built his house upon the rock and the rains came tumbling down." Pray with me that we may all stand on the foundation of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

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## **"Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on me..."**

*Friday, October 4, 2019*

### **Matthew 8:1-17**

*"Lord, if you choose you can make me clean." He stretched out his hands and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" - Matthew 8:2b-3*

The Sermon on the Mount ends. We now see Jesus coming down from the mountain followed by crowds and immediately acting out God's love. He heals with his touch, and even from a distance. He heals the outcast leper, the servant of a Roman soldier, Peter's mother-in-law, and many unnamed others.

Through Jesus' great love, the love of God for us, I have come to believe that healing always occurs for the faithful and for others as well. The great conundrum being that "to heal" does not always mean "to cure," or have illness eradicated. When my own mother-in-law was in her last weeks of life, I

made the trip from Houston to Georgetown to visit her. During those quiet visits, she shared with me the details of some of her life's great pains. Her father left the family when she, the oldest of four siblings, was 12. She lost a son, my husband's youngest brother, after caring for him through an eight-year illness. There were other stories as well. On one visit, a cleaning lady was just entering the room to mop when I arrived, and she asked me to wait in the hall. Before this dear lady began her task, she walked over to my mother-in-law's bed, called her by name and asked her how she was doing. A brief exchange between the two women followed. I stood in the hall until this healer was finished with her chores, and I had to wipe tears from my eyes before entering the room.

My belief is that healing of life's hurts can come through folks just like you and me with just a word, just a touch. Pray with me that we may all become vessels of healing to others through our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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## **"Eternal Father strong to save, whose arm hath bound the restless wave..." - Hymn 608**

*Saturday, October 5, 2019*

### **Matthew 8:18-27**

*They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" - Matthew 8:27*

Jesus is such a wise and gracious teacher. Here he again reminds us that he is in control, that he is that rock upon which we can build a firm foundation. How like the original Twelve, those in the boat, I find myself. I seem ever ready to panic, to doubt, or to despair. Just ask my husband.

Recently I was with one of my daughter's young friends as she described an incident on that dreaded Interstate 35. The family of wife, husband, and four children had barely avoided an accident. It happened right before their eyes, a car crossing several lanes, then rolling over on the verge. Her comment was, "I realized how little control I have over life." Oh, if I only could remember that Jesus does have control, control over the wind, and the waves, and the storms that inevitably will come into our daily lives with some regularity. May this be our comfort -- he comes to his disciples in this story and to us in our needs with comfort and reassurance. "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" - Matthew 8:26. Pray with me that you and I may daily increase in faith and in knowledge of our Lord's love and care for us. Amen.

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