



## Daily Meditations April 8-13, 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: Judy Aronow, Pat Gillory, Jay Nickel, Bob Reed, T. Cay Rowe, Lisa Wilkinson, and Carroll Wilson.*

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

### COLLECT for Lent 5:

*Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.  
**Amen.***

### Who Sinned?

Monday, April 8, 2019

#### John 9:1-17

*"As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'" - John 9:1-2*

I've always been intrigued by the disciples' question in this story of Jesus' healing of the man born blind. The disciples are obviously operating out of an Old Testament theology that says that whatever happens to us, good or bad, is in some way caused by our own actions. Thus, they question whether the parents have in some way sinned and caused the man's blindness as some sort of divine punishment for his sins. To know that this distorted way of thinking is still alive and well, you only need to listen to the survivors of so many disasters when they question: "What did I do to deserve this?"

But what about the first part of their question, asking whether this man, who was born blind, had sinned in some way that caused his own blindness? Their question implies that the man sinned before he was born, either in the womb or in some prior life. Neither makes any sense and shows how confused the disciples were.

Jesus, however, will have none of it. He says, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned." In the rest of the story, he makes it clear that as the Light of the World, he will be with the blind man in his struggles, no matter what.

All too often in our lives, stuff happens. Perhaps we were the cause of it; perhaps not. But the response of Jesus is always the same: love.

### We See

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

## **John 9:18-41**

*"Jesus said to them, 'If you are blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.'" - John 9:41*

This interchange between Jesus and the Jewish authorities over the healing of the man born blind ends on a personally troubling note. What Jesus is essentially saying is that we cannot be responsible for a failure to act to cure injustice or wrongdoing of which we are unaware. But, like the Jewish authorities, the evidence of injustice and oppression is all around us, and in this age of the 24-hour news cycle, we can hardly say we are unaware of it. So, very clearly, "We see!" The bigger question is having seen, what do we do about it? Perhaps, we should lean on the very wise Serenity Prayer of the brilliant Christian theologian Reinhold Niebuhr:

*God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.*

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## **Listening**

*Wednesday, April 10, 2019*

### **John 10:1-18**

*"Anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls out his own sheep by name and leads them out." - John 10:1-3*

The parable of the sheep and the shepherd is filled with deep images. But because most of us are not familiar with sheep, it is easy to miss the point Jesus is making. Several different shepherds in 1st century Palestine would keep their flocks mixed together in a fenced enclosure guarded by a night watchman to protect them from thieves and bandits. In the morning, each shepherd would call out his sheep, and those who recognized his voice would follow him out to pasture.

Origen, one of the early leading theologians of the new Christian church, emphasized that the "thieves and bandits" are not just people outside of us who might misguide us: They are "also those egocentric propensities inside of us that lead us astray, the false and tempting urges and voices that all for us to deny the truth in order to fill egocentric desires. In order to follow the voice of the Shepherd, we must spend time in quiet listening to discern what is the true voice we should follow."\*

*\*Mystical Christianity, by John Sanford, p.211*

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## **The Word Made Flesh**

*Thursday, April 11, 2019*

### **John 10:19-42**

*Jesus answered, "It is not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'?" - John 10:34*

To the Jews listening to Jesus, this was a very troubling, even blasphemous, statement that they could not swallow. They immediately began to pick up stones to throw at him. But the message that Jesus emphasizes throughout the latter part of the Gospel of John is just that: We are invited to participate fully in the divine life with God. As Jesus says later in John 14:20: "On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you,". This is the deep message of the Incarnation.

Another early Father of the church, Irenaeus of Lyons, put it this way: "He became what we are so that we might become what He is."

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## Resurrection Now

Friday, April 12, 2019

### John 11:1-27

*Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."  
Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life." - John 11:24-25a*

Jesus has come to Bethany, where his dear friend Lazarus has recently died. In a mixture of desperation and hope, Martha confronts Jesus with her heart-felt desire for her brother to rise again to be with them. After Jesus tells her that Lazarus will rise again, she responds with the general Pharasaic understanding that he will rises again along with all other good Jews on the last day, at the end of the age. But Jesus emphasizes to her that through him, Lazarus can be part of what John calls "eternal life," and he can have that *now*, not at some unknown end of the age.

This idea of living in eternal life now is a key idea that is the driving force behind much of the teachings of St. Paul. For Paul, the resurrection of Jesus meant that he was the first fruits of the new age now, and that God was beginning to fulfill his promises now!\*

*\*N.T. Wright What St. Paul Really Said, p. 141.*

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## Power of Tears

Saturday, April 13, 2019

### John 11:28-44

"When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. - John 11:33-35

Mary, the sister of Martha and of Lazarus, gently rebukes Jesus for not being there to save her brother and begins to weep. Her words bring Jesus to tears as well. These verses are often cited as evidence for the humanity of Jesus--his tears signifying Jesus' deep mourning for his dear friend Lazarus. But Bible scholar Francis Moloney emphasizes that the Greek phrase translated in the NRSV as "greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved" should be more accurately translated as "moved in anger and frustration." Why anger and frustration?

Mary was the contemplative member of the Martha-Mary duo, the one who sat at Jesus' feet those many hours, the one who of all people should have understood who Jesus was and what belief in him would bring. And now she shows that she didn't understand him either. So, Jesus decides to raise Lazarus from the dead. When Jesus asks where they have laid Lazarus, the Jews respond with the exact same phrase with which Jesus invited his first disciples into his ministry: "Come and see."

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