

Whispers of the Spirit



Meditations for April 18th to April 24th

Whispers of the Spirit is a ministry of Deacon Carolyn Quinnell and friends.

This week's *Whispers of the Spirit* have been written by Lew Alsobrook

Sunday, April 18th Acts 3:12-19 / Psalm 4 / 1 John 3:1-7 /
Luke 24:36b-48

Luke 24:39 *Look at my hands and my feet, see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.*

Shortly after Christ's death and resurrection, two followers of Christ were walking on the road to Emmaus. Jesus joined them on their journey, but they did not recognize him until he showed them the wounds on his hands and feet.

How about us? Do we see Christ on the altar when you enter church? Do we recognize Christ on the faces of your brothers and sisters? Are we able to find Christ in the people all around us, or do we need the sight of his pierced hands and feet?

If we look carefully, we may indeed find Christ all around us. How that can change the way we interact with people. It just takes a little prayer to find the inner vision that will help us see the spiritual beauty that lies within each person.

As Jesus said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed."



Monday, April 19th Daniel 4:19-27 / Psalm 25 /
1 John 3:19-4:6 / Luke 4:14-30

Luke 4:15 *He began to preach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.*

Luke wrote these words about Jesus, of course. But throughout the intervening ages, they could be applied to many who have preached in synagogues and churches.

One such person who preached and was praised by most was the man whose feast day is today - St. Alphege. He was born in England in 953 AD. He grew to become a monk, and eventually the Archbishop of Canterbury. He was renowned for his ability to preach and affect those who heard him. He was captured by pagan Vikings in 1012 AD. He preached to his captors for months and even converted their chief king. Yet when the Vikings were about to depart and return to Denmark, Alphege was killed. He was canonized soon after, and for hundreds of years he was widely venerated as England's most prominent saint.

His life, preaching, and martyrdom would be hard for many of us to even contemplate duplicating. Yet that isn't what's required of most of us. Preaching can be a quiet conversation with a friend, or a kindly deed for someone. Such quiet "preachings" could help change lives for the better, for Christ.

Tuesday, April 20th Daniel 4:28-37 / Psalm 26, 28 /
1 John 4:7-21 / Luke 4:31-37

Psalm 26:3 *Your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to you.*

1 John 4:7 *Let us love one another, because Love is from God.*

The theme for today is clear when you look at the readings above. In the bible, it was perhaps best expressed in the words of Paul to the Corinthians: “The three most important things to have are Faith, Hope, and Love, but the greatest of them is Love.”

But whom should we love? It is easy to love those who love us but much, much harder to love those who don't. And it is our approach to those who don't love us that matters the most. When confronting those folks, it is tempting to shout the loudest and show the most indignation. Don't try to fight your way through a confrontation; look for a way to love your way out of it.

Follow Jesus. He didn't just talk the talk about Love; he walked the walk- from his preaching to his miracles, to his final walk of love on his way to Calvary.

With your friends, shower them with your love. As you meet new people, be sure they know your Christian love is there for them. With your enemies, what love can you offer them? This may be the greatest test of being a Christian.

Wednesday, April 21st Daniel 5:1-12 / Psalm 38 /

1 John 5:1-12 / Luke 4:38-44

Psalm 38:21-22 *Do not forsake me, O Lord...make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.*

Two days ago, April 19, we reflected on the life of St. Alphege, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was martyred in 1012. Today, we celebrate the life of another Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Anselm. He served at Canterbury from 1093 until his death in 1109. He was canonized in 1494. He was a brilliant philosopher and theologian, and his theological

brilliance is often compared to St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. He strongly believed that earthly kings should not have power over the church, and twice he was exiled by two different kings of England for his beliefs.

In what may appear to be really shifting gears, we turn now to King David in Psalm 38. It is one of the saddest psalms, a song of pain, despair, and guilt. We find David saying, “There is no health in my bones; Your hand presses me down; I am utterly spent and crushed; my friends and companions stand aloof.”

We see that for both Anselm and David, the good times didn’t always roll. That’s probably true for a lot of us. There are “up’s” and there are “downs.” In fact, exile and despair might seem appropriate today- covid, isolation- making us feel lost and alone.

Yet in the end, St. Anselm was recalled from exile in triumph, and David became one of the greatest kings of Israel. When you’re down, remember that nothing is too dark or complicated for God. Just keep going- one prayer at a time.

Thursday, April 22nd Daniel 5:13-30 / Psalm 37:1-18 /
1 John 5:13-21 / Luke 5:1-11

Psalm 37:3 *Trust in the Lord and do good, so you will live in the land...*

April 22 is the perfect day to reflect on the legacy of John Muir- wanderer, preservationist, writer, and founder of the Sierra Club. Yesterday was his birthday (born 1839), today is Earth Day (named in his honor), and- a little known fact- today the Episcopal Church celebrates the feast of St. John Muir! He was named a minor saint of the Episcopal Church in 2010. The church calls him a “Prophet of the Wilderness.”

John Muir was born in Dunbar, Scotland in 1838. His family emigrated to America and settled in Wisconsin when he was 11. As a young man he worked in industry in Indiana. Then, in an almost St. Paul like sequence, he was temporarily blinded in a work accident. When he regained his sight, he realized that factory work was not what he wanted to do. So he left his job and started walking, first to Florida, and then across the continent to California and his eventual home in Yosemite, which he called “God’s grandest cathedral.”

With what he saw in Yosemite, it became his mission to preserve wilderness, not a popular stance in an expanding America in the late 19th century. But he persevered, and eventually convinced President Teddy Roosevelt and Congress to name Yosemite a National Park in 1890, to the dismay of many loggers, miners and ranchers.

We certainly find God in St. Mary’s, but he can also be found in a towering redwood forest, the sound of a breaking wave, or in the bloom of an Easter tulip ~ everywhere. Novelist Wendell Berry once remarked, “There are no unsacred places, only sacred places and desecrated places.”

Like St. John Muir, remember, this is God’s earth. Let us do our part to take care of it, so it can take care of us and those who follow us.

Friday, April 23rd Daniel 6:1-15 / Psalm 105:1-22 /
2 John 1-13 / Luke 5:12-26

Psalm 105:1 *Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people.*

Are you ready to slay a dragon? Are you ready to take on a war machine? Today we reflect on the lives of two men who are celebrated today by the Episcopal Church ~ St.

George, and Toyohiko Kagawa, two men from different lands and different times, both with an unwavering faith in Christ which directed their actions.

St. George was a soldier in the Roman Army and a member of the Praetorian Guard, directly responsible for protecting the emperor. He was martyred in about 300AD for refusing to renounce his Christian faith. He is one of the most revered saints in history, and is the patron saint of countries and cities ranging from England to Moscow. Interestingly, he is venerated by both Christians and Muslims.

Toyohiko Kagawa was born in Japan in 1888. He was converted to Christianity by two ministers who taught him English. He attended Princeton Theological Seminary. Throughout his life, he was an enigma to the Japanese government. He was an activist who formed trade unions for workers (which was illegal in Japan), for which he was twice arrested. Yet when Tokyo was severely damaged by an earthquake in 1923, he was put in charge of reconstruction.

Before World War 2, Toyohiko organized Japan's National Anti-War League. During the war he was arrested, but even before the war ended, Japan put him in charge of rebuilding the country. He died in 1960.

These men both lived their Christian conscience. They were both followers of Jesus in a time and place where that was tantamount to swimming against a very strong tide. Their lives were certainly models for us to follow. They taught us to live Christianity. Now most of our acquaintances know we are Christians. Are we living a Christian life and demonstrating it to others through our actions? Our faith can strengthen our actions, and our actions can strengthen our faith. And as our faith is strengthened, the light of Christ shines brighter through us.

Saturday, April 24th Daniel 6:16-28 / Psalm 30, 32 /
3 John 1-15 / Luke 5:27-39

Psalm 30:2 *O Lord, I cried to you for help and you healed me.*

Three days ago, we reflected on one of the saddest psalms- Psalm 38- David's song of pain and despair, where he looked at God as one whose "hand presses me down." Today, it's a different David in Psalms 30 and 32 ~ one who is healed in body and spirit, and thankful to God.

You can see this in quotes from these psalms: "His anger is for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime." "Happy are those whose transgressions are forgiven."

When you read Psalm 38, it feels like the tribulations will never end. It is the hardest thing to do sometimes to realize that the darkest times will end. Look back a year. Covid was a monster that ravaged our lives and forced us into months of isolation- even from our church. It was the darkest of nights, but now the dawn is here. We prayed; we persevered. St. Mary's has reopened. Vaccinations are widespread. Hopefully, the end is in sight.

Remember, no matter our transgressions or our problems, God's favor is there for us. It is never too late to call upon the Lord. Bring your problems to St. Mary's. Our church is a hospital for the soul.



