

Daily Meditations

Thursday – November 27, 2014

*Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.
Psalm 80:3*

Unmet needs or unfulfilled expectancies tend to grow, in the urgency with which they are expressed or experienced. In Psalm 80, the psalmist expands the way that God is called upon from “O God,” in verse 3, to “O God of hosts,” in verse 6, and finally “O Lord God of hosts,” in verse 19. Each of the verses goes on to include the appeal “let your face shine, that we may be saved.” The entire psalm revolves around the desire to be saved and all of the historical occasions when Israel has needed to be saved, and God has responded.

Any person or nation could rewrite this psalm, substituting our own historic or personal predicaments. Some would not credit God for their deliverance, but that would be an omission. God has not justified every action of any of us, nor has God corrected every misstep. What God has done is to love and bless all persons, offering them an expanded menu of possibilities, for all who walk with God.

As we enter the season of Advent, we continue to need and to seek God’s restoration. Each of us has experienced our own wilderness



time, our own forms of captivity, and our own hunger and thirstiness. Much of our need is resultant from our lapses in faithfulness. As with Israel, we are in need of God’s intervention. We prepare, with anticipation of an infusion of blessings, delivered by the coming Christ.

God of Restoration,

We await your blessings and your forgiveness. We have been blessed in the past, but did not fully appreciate or secure ourselves in these blessings. In your graciousness, establish us anew. We are dependent upon your love and your mercy.

*In Christ,
Amen*

Friday – November 28, 2014

*On that day, there shall not be either cold or frost. And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the Lord), not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light.
Zechariah 14:8*

When we await future things, we usually lack details of what is coming. We are able to anticipate that these things will be good if they are from good sources or problematic if they are produced by negative sources. Without hearing the tune, which presently does not exist, I know that the next recording by Stevie Wonder will be pleasing to me and well received by the public. He has demonstrated himself to be a good and reliable source. Such confidence is less than absolute, when vested in humans, but is fully justifiable when vested in God.

Zechariah may have been provided with accurate details of future days by way of revelation. He also may have provided imagery which was consistent with what he knew of God’s goodness. Those

concerned with extreme temperature conditions will no longer be troubled by heat or cold. Those whose productivity is tied to daylight hours will have limitless light. In the manner of Zechariah, I have often claimed that in God’s realm there is Polish sausage without cholesterol. It all depends on what troubles one seeks to be liberated from.

The day to come which Zechariah calls “that day” is typically understood to be the end of human history. Most prophecy seems to envision a final settling of circumstances in which God straightens things out “once and for all.” Nobody could have understood that Jesus would be capable of redirecting the world without shutting it down. We are still living into his reformation but it seems clear to some of us that history has not ended, but the Savior has come.

Transforming Lord,

You change us and our surroundings, in ways that we can never understand or envision. You know how to bless. We are willing and able to entrust the details of our blessing to you.

*By your power,
Amen*

Saturday – November 29, 2014

*I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the survivors of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture; it will resound with people.
Micah 2:12*

Having spent a lifetime in the Church, images of the people of God being gathered together seem poetic, at best. It must be representative of something that may actually happen. Church folks struggle to be gathered for a group portrait. Certainly God’s intentions are authentic, but

gathering us together must be a metaphor. It is far easier to embrace visions of God collecting the remnant of Israel or of "Fillintheblanks" Christian Church. The remnant has not come together willingly, nor is there sufficient energy to object.

God is not limited to our vision of the future. Instead, we are invited to God's vision of the future. To experience the best of what God has for us, each of us is called to "be gathered" with some folks that we are not accustomed to spending time with. God will convene a reunion which could be entrusted to nobody else, but God.

We are called upon to believe in and to expect the unexpected. Jesus epitomizes this. He was a king without health care, born where humans were in the minority.

He was not a remnant, nor are we. He stands as clear evidence that God can gather whoever God wants to gather. There will be very few "no shows," for the gathering will "resound with people."

Convening Lord,

Gather us when and where you please. It is clear that your plans are more promising than ours. Give us acceptance, rather than tolerance, of those with whom you gather us. You are Lord, and not any of us.

*In Surrender,
Amen*

Sunday – November 30, 2014

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence – as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil – to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. Isaiah 64:1-2



We await the coming of Christ, not only during Advent, but at every key juncture of life. We expect Jesus to show up at our baptisms, graduations, and to meet us at summer camp, when the Gospel message begins to be personal to us. Although we are clearly aware of our need for Jesus, we are not without expectations, or even demands, regarding how his arrival and time with us will unfold. Christians only have to see or imagine an event once or twice for it to become an expectation.

In Isaiah 64, the prophet has decided that some godly pyrotechnics are called for. In his view, God ought to rip heaven apart on the way to rescuing Israel on earth. Mountains, which have not participated in any act of injustice, should be frightened or shaken into a state of quaking. It is an impressive vision, reminiscent

of the throne scene in Isaiah 6, but it may be overkill for a God who simply said "let there be light."

We need to trust God to determine how dramatic or understated each occasion needs to be. We run the risk of joining Naaman, who jeopardized his blessing by insisting on the healing of his choice. Jesus cannot be counted on to look like we expect, act like we expect, talk like we expect or bless like we expect. Jesus can be counted on.

Heavenly God,

We submit ourselves to your methods and to your outcomes. You know how to bless and we need blessings. Come as you choose and when you choose. We will praise your name and worship you.

*In God We Trust,
Amen*

Monday – December 1, 2014

For all the peoples walk, each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever. Micah 4:5



In the display and handling of the flag of the United States of America it is taught that the U.S. flag should never be displayed at a lower level than that of another nation or dipped in respect of another nation's flag. The guiding principle is the belief that there is no nation that the U.S. needs to look up to. Although this is a reflection of national pride, it is good, in my opinion, that presidents and other representatives of this nation have been willing to be humble and respectful enough to bow before kings, queens, and popes. Being the "big dog" does not require treating others as puppies.

There are differences in observing the ways that our Bible and other Christian writings speak of the "gods" of other faiths. It may be that we should not only use lower case letters, but should also add quotation marks. This is true because it reflects our actual belief that there is only one God. The other faiths, according to our faith, do not have lesser gods. They have elected to not embrace the only God. Others will walk in the name of their "gods" for a while, but only the true God will be available to serve and walk with forever.

Our GOD,

We love you dearly, but we are willing to share. We cherish you, but do not possess you. May the world around us come to experience your love and your blessings.

*In Jesus' Name,
Amen*

Tuesday – December 2, 2014

Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished, that pangs have seized you like a woman in labor? Micah 4:9

Even while we await the coming of Christ or God's next blessing, there should be a deepening of our faith and expansion of hopes, based upon God's record of deliverance. The questions that the writer poses in

this text call for such faith and hope to show up, even in times of despair. These questions call to memory Jesus' response upon being awakened by the disciples during a storm. Though the storm was every bit as bad as they feared, his question was "have you still no faith."

Some of us have become so accustomed to crying, aloud or otherwise, that we cry as a first response. Some have even advanced the notion that those who cry more readily are more in touch with their feelings. This text does not invite us to put away our legitimate feelings, but to allow trust in our God to embolden us.

The question "is there no king in you" returns us to the pivotal scene in the great movie classic "Beverly Hills Chihuahua" when the featured pooch escapes her pampered persona and discovers her "inner bark." This was made possible in the movie because of a visit to the state of Chihuahua in Mexico, where the dogs that are named for that locale are not viewed as "Toys", but as royalty. When we recognize our origin we will claim our royal heritage.



King of Kings,

Your royalty is in each of us and calls us to live boldly. Though we still fear, we will look within, to find the strength and capacity that you have created in us.

*In Your Image,
Amen*

"...Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." Luke 21:36

In the text, Jesus warns hearers that they should be sufficiently vigilant and aware to escape "all these things." He has named some of these things, but the message may be strongest when each person plugs in their own version of "these things." For some, these things are those that they stoop to when going after a particular job. For others, the failure to go after any job is "these things." The category reaches into every area of our lives. It involves how we work and how we play. It adds up to being an expression of who we are. We must escape those things that will present us before the Son of Man as undesirable.

Although Jesus speaks of the Son of Man in the third person, we should be certain to know the he speaks of himself. He is a compassionate judge who is hoping to prepare each one who will stand before him. He wants to find in your favor. In order to do so, he will provide all that you need to be ready. We must each create our "these things" list and work to overcome whatever threatens our eternity.

Righteous Judge,

We have many things to withstand, but we have everything that we need to do so. Grant, to each of us, your divine counsel and judge us with your supreme mercy.

*In Humility,
Amen*



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