

Sacredise Daily

Personal Worship Resources for the Week:
14 - 20 January 2018

Thought for the Week:

It is popular in today's Church to speak of making a "decision for Christ". There is value in this – we do need to recognise our capacity to choose to follow Jesus or not. But, what is missed in this language is God's choice for us. This Sunday you may have been reminded about either the boy Samuel who learned to hear God's call for the first time (1 Samuel 3:1-20), or the disciple Nathaniel who, in spite of his initial scepticism, was called by Jesus to follow (John 1:43-51). Both of these stories show that God takes the initiative in inviting us – calling us – to live our lives in alignment with God's presence, purposes and priorities.

In both of these stories, the relationship began with God revealing God's self to the person. As they encountered God's glory, they found themselves irresistibly drawn to God, and their lives were changed. Then, as a result of this encounter, they became people who reflected God's glory and proclaimed God's message to their world. The starting point, though, is always God's choice to manifest God's glory.

This week why not seek to prepare yourself for God's self-revelation? Why not open your heart and your senses to the glory of God around you and listen for God's call? Then, as God reveals God's self to you, respond by committing again to follow Christ and to proclaim Christ's message through your own life.

Sunday 14 January 2018

Reading: John 1:43-51

Reflection: Nathaniel got a big surprise when he met Jesus. Having heard where Jesus was from he had all sorts of prejudices that made him sceptical of Philip's recommendation. But, then, when he met Jesus everything changed – not because of anything he did, but because of the way Jesus revealed God's glory to him.

The image Jesus uses of the angels ascending and descending

comes, of course, from the ancient story of Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28:10-22). The trickster Jacob was on the run from his angry brother, whom he had tricked one too many times. Then, one night as he slept, God revealed God's glory to him in a dream of angels ascending and descending on a stairway to heaven. And with the vision came God's promise, and God's call for Jacob to be God's instrument of blessing to the nations. Now, with Nathaniel, Jesus uses this image to show that He is the one who reveals God's glory to the world, and who offers a "stairway to heaven" - a way to encounter God's glory and be part of God's purpose.

In what ways may God be seeking to reveal God's glory to you in Christ today? How can you open yourself more to this glory and allow it to change and challenge you?

Practice for Today: God's glory is not as hidden as we may suppose. Usually when we miss God's glory the problem is not with God, but with our ability to see. The best way to learn to recognise God's presence all around us is to practice the discipline of wonder. Today, try to slow down a little and look for the wonder in the ordinary things around you – plants and animals, people and circumstances.

Breath-Prayer for Today: May your glory fill my vision and my life, O God of Glory.

Monday 15 January 2018

Reading: 1 Samuel 9:27-10:8

Reflection: Years after hearing God's call as a boy, Samuel became a prophet and a judge, and the one God appointed to anoint Israel's first king – Saul. Even though the writers of this part of Israel's history described Israel's desire for a king as a rejection of God (1 Samuel 8:7), God still worked with the people to appoint and call their leader. This was a time of change for the nation of Israel, and God left nothing to chance. In order to reassure Saul that he was indeed chosen by God, Samuel described in great detail the events that would happen in the next few days, and that would reveal God's activity and call in the life of Saul. This was a gracious gift of faith that God gave to God's chosen servant for the work that he would have to face as king of God's people.

Think about how God has called you – like Samuel and Nathaniel – to participate in God’s saving work. If you have any doubts about your “calledness” or your ability to contribute to God’s mission, think about the times and places in your own life when you have been aware of God’s activity, and when you have been able to make a difference – however small – in someone else’s life. Allow this reflection to strengthen your faith and inspire your gratitude and commitment to God.

How can your memory of God’s work inspire and encourage you as you reaffirm your response to God’s call in your own life?

Practice for Today: Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen.” Remembering and giving thanks builds our faith because it keeps us mindful of what we have seen of God’s work. Today, give thanks and affirm your faith in God whenever you remember or become aware of God’s activity and presence in your life.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Thank you, Gracious God, for your presence and activity in my life and for the gift of faith it brings.

Tuesday 16 January 2018

Reading: Psalm 86

Reflection: It’s tempting to think that the Christ-following life should make things easier for us, and in some ways it does. There is no question that following Christ teaches us attitudes and ways of being that make us more whole, more connected and more able to contribute to the world. But, in many ways, following Christ also makes things more difficult. If we are serious about living a God-honouring life, we will discover that, like any relationship, we need to work at it daily – choosing to praise and thank God, and committing over and over to generosity, forgiveness, grace, compassion and justice. It also means that we will often be at odds with the values and practices of our world and the people in it – which can lead to persecution, rejection and heartbreak. This is what is reflected in today’s reading from the Psalms.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is reported to have said, “When Christ calls a [person], he bids [that person] come and die.” This is still as true for

us as it was for him, or for biblical servants of God like Samuel and Nathaniel. This means that when we respond to God’s call, we can expect to wrestle with our own tendencies to selfishness and rebellion, and we can expect to wrestle with the great struggles of our world – war, poverty, injustice, hatred, division and persecution. But, thankfully, God promises to strengthen and help us, and to provide companions to share the journey.

What struggles may God be asking you to accept today as you seek to be faithful to God’s call?

Practice for Today: Perhaps the greatest gift we possess when we face difficult times is the ability to pray – which, at its most basic, is simply asking for help. Today, practice asking for help whenever you may need it. You can do this in quick “arrow prayers” addressed to God, and you can do it by asking the people that God has placed around you as agents of God’s help.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Give me strength, Dear God, and save me.

Wednesday 17 January 2018

Reading: Luke 18:15-17

Reflection: One of the most powerful and abiding images that Jesus used to describe God’s Reign is the child. In our world of power games and the constant quest for wealth, the innocence, naivety, playfulness and trustfulness of children can seem like a strange way to picture God’s presence and purposes. But, once we recognise that God’s Reign is an “upside down” realm in which the priorities and values are the opposite of our human systems, we can begin to understand why Jesus taught that we should become like children.

As we seek to respond to God’s call and participate in what God is doing among us we must recognise that there is a lot to learn – and unlearn. We will need to become, again, like children – beginners, learners in a world where everything is new. We will need to trust God as a child trusts a parent for security and guidance. And we will need to approach the world with a new wonder and openness. As we saw on Sunday, Nathaniel had to learn this when he met Jesus.

He had to let go of what he thought he knew about Messiahs, about Nazareth and about God's glory and he had to become open to the new thing God was doing.

How can you embrace your inner child in response to God's call today?

Practice for Today: One of the qualities that we lose as adults is the ability to listen and learn. We become "knowers" who feel we have learned all we need, and so we lose the capacity for wonder, for surprise and for humility. Today, try to let go of these "adult" ways, and practice listening – to others, to the world, to God. As you listen, try not to prejudge what you hear – practice openness so that you can learn the new things God wants to teach you.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Teach me, O God, the humility, the openness and the wonder of a child.

Thursday 18 January 2018

Reading: Revelation 18:11-20

Reflection: Today we begin our preparation for Sunday – but the theme of God's call continues. Where last Sunday the focus was on Samuel and Nathaniel, this Sunday, we meet the reluctant prophet, Jonah, and the fishermen, Peter, Andrew, James, and John. At the heart of these "call" stories is the challenge to shift our priorities from our own agendas and desires to God's – which is always harder than it sounds.

Today's reading from the Revelation sounds like it could have been written yesterday. It speaks of the fall of "Babylon" – a symbol of human power, wealth and excess. But now, we are confronted with a vision of a world in which wealth has suddenly vanished and people no longer have the means to buy and sell. In this vision, in spite of its grandeur, wealth, and power, this great city came to an end – as all empires do eventually. Everything Babylon and its people had trusted in, and that felt so secure and lasting, disappeared, and they were left with nothing on which to base their lives. The warning, of course, is to be careful of where we place our trust and what priorities we embrace. The "things" of this world –

human goods and agendas – will ultimately fail us. Only God's Reign will sustain us eternally.

How can you be more intentional in embracing the priorities of God's Reign in your life today?

Practice for Today: The great thing about following Christ is that we always get the chance to start again. The practice of repentance is not a shameful thing. Rather, it is a gift that teaches us to recognise when we've got our lives on the wrong track, and change back to God's life-giving ways. Throughout today, use the practice of repentance to shift your priorities into alignment with God.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Bring my life back into alignment with your Reign, O God.

Friday 19 January 2018

Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-13

Reflection: Have you ever called God a liar? Well, that's what Jeremiah does in today's reading. He felt that God had misled him when God had called him to be a prophet. God had not told him that he would be persecuted for speaking God's word. Nor had God informed him that he would not be able to keep silent even if he wanted to in order to protect himself. And so Jeremiah's life had become very painful and hard. Yet, he continued to trust God, and he expressed his pain in a prayer of lament, which included an affirmation of faith and a song of praise - as biblical laments usually do.

This kind of prayer is important for us to learn as followers of Jesus. If we truly seek to live as citizens of God's Reign, we will find that we cannot help sharing God's purposes and values with others. Sometimes our witness will be welcomed, but sometimes we will find ourselves in conflict with "the powers-that-be" or with those who are invested in the status quo. At these times we will need to reaffirm our faith, and to remember that God is with us, protecting and strengthening us.

How is God asking you to witness to God's Reign today? How can you reaffirm your faith and commit to praising God even when it gets tough?

Practice for Today: “Preach the Gospel at all times - use words if necessary,” said St. Francis of Assisi. Jesus called his followers to be his witnesses. This was true for the fishermen who were called first, and it’s true for us. Today, try to embrace a practice of witnessing to Christ – either through Christlike words or Christlike actions.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Help me to show others your ways, Jesus, in what I do and in what I say.

Saturday 20 January 2018

Reading: Psalm 62:5-12

Reflection: Waiting and trusting are practices that are frequently taught in the Scriptures. They are not passive ways of living, but are activities that actively orient our lives around God’s presence, purposes and priorities. This is why the Psalmist celebrates God as a fortress and the source of true victory in living. This is why he encourages people to trust God, and to reject a life of dishonest gain or materialism. In the short term “playing” the human systems of wealth and power may seem to bring life and joy, but when we wait - when we commit to a life lived from an eternal perspective - we discover that God’s Reign offers far more lasting benefits. This waiting takes a commitment to trust and to live from the call that God has given us.

When Jonah was called to be a prophet, he knew it would challenge his prejudices and values and so he ran away. But ultimately God’s call would not release him and he finally obeyed. When Jesus called the fishermen they knew they would be leaving their nets and using their talents for a different cause. When we respond to God’s call we may remain in the same house, job or circumstances, but we know that everything about us – who we are, what we value, and what guides our lives – has changed. And so we become those who live waiting on God, and trusting in God’s Reign.

How can you practice waiting on God a little more today?

Practice for Today: The waiting life requires us to slow down, embrace stillness, and allow our awareness to expand beyond the immediate realities of our world. Today, create “waiting moments”

whenever you can. This doesn’t have to take lots of time. It can be a brief moment in the midst of your usual activities when you stop, recognise God’s presence and reaffirm your faith in God and your acceptance of God’s call.

Breath-Prayer for Today: I wait on you, O God, and trust in your Gracious Presence.

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