

Monday, March 1, 2010
Isaiah 55:1-3*

Imagine this invitation from the perspective of the poor. For someone with no job and money coming in only as gifts, or from the pawn shop, or as a result of odd jobs, what would this mean? How good would this news be?

Notice that it's not just food being offered, but also purchasing power. That tells me self-esteem is also being restored. So it's a very holistic offer, reviving body and soul.

I would imagine this news would be cause for rejoicing. It is the promise of nourishment. It is the voice of someone who cares—the voice of someone who has not forgotten you.

This, I think, is what God is about. The Lord cares for us inside and out. The Lord wants to nurture us, giving us good things and helping us grow in every way. And the Lord never forgets us. This is truly good news.

Now, if we could only get as excited about it as do those who are truly in need.

Tuesday, March 2, 2010

Isaiah 55:4-9*

You and I are members of a secret society. We have unspoken rules that we understand perfectly well, but anyone trying to enter our society would find these rules baffling and frustrating. Ultimately, these rules will keep others out.

The rules I speak of are the rules of the middle class—or the rules of wealth (whichever you happen to be). You and I know how to do things in our society. We know how to build credit rating, how to talk to teachers and employers, how to network, how to behave in a restaurant, and how to work with creditors.

These are common sense rules that allow us to function in our world. These rules also keep people of poverty from entering our society.

By the same token, you and I don't know the rules of poverty. We don't know what's important in the poverty culture, we don't know where to get aid, we don't know how to behave in jail. But we're not going to learn those rules because we believe our rules to be correct.

What we see in verses 8-9 is that we shouldn't be too sure of our rules. God's society—God's kingdom—is different from ours. And if we're going to be part of God's kingdom we're all going to have to learn new rules, whether we're rich, poor, or somewhere in the middle.

Why not start learning now?

Wednesday, March 3, 2010

Psalm 63:1-4*

If you haven't yet, you will come to a dry place in your journey with God. These are times when God seems absent, when we can't detect God's presence, when our prayers seem to bounce right back to us and go unheard. Mother Teresa even went from heavenly visions to forty years of feeling as if God cut her off.

It's not pleasant. It's not easy. But it happens. So what do we do when we hit those dry places?

Mother Teresa provides the example. She maintained all her disciplines. She did morning and evening prayers. She received the bread and the cup. She went on spiritual retreats. And she went daily to serve the poor. She knew these things were right, and she knew they would keep her close to God until the day she once again felt God's presence.

If you're in a dry place, don't give up. Keep praying. Keep reading scripture. Keep worshiping. And keep serving. Such discipline will keep you growing even when it feels like you're alone.

Thursday, March 4, 2010
Psalm 63:5-8*

What is it about one's bed that makes it such a spiritual place?
Bed is still a place where we pray and pour out our souls before
God. Bed is still a place where we are very honest with the Lord.

Maybe it's because the bed is a vulnerable place. We are stripped
of our pretenses there. The noise of the world is shut off. You are alone
with God, even if you're not alone in bed.

I encourage you to cherish and make use of this soft, warm
sanctuary. Pray. Call out. Listen. Pour out the day and be refreshed.
And if you fall asleep, so much the better. That means you truly found
rest in the arms of God.

May you find peace in your sanctuary tonight.

Friday, March 5, 2010
I Corinthians 10:1-5*

The people of Israel had a shared experience. They went through the Passover, the Red Sea, and the Wilderness together. This exodus experience bound them together.

We don't have that kind of shared experience. We are on millions of individual journeys. So, how do we come together as God's people?

First, we must share with each other the experiences we are having. In so doing, we will come to understand and appreciate each other, and we may learn we have much in common.

Second, we need to have some shared experiences. Being in a study together, going on a retreat or a mission trip together, starting a service project together, all these will give us shared experiences that will bind us together.

Finally, we need to gather on Sundays. We need to receive communion. We need to hear our common stories—the story of Israel, the story of Jesus. These are the stories and rituals that flow through our veins and make us one.

Saturday, March 6, 2010
I Corinthians 10:5-13*

Why didn't Tiger Woods learn from the story of David Letterman? And why didn't David Letterman learn from Mark Sanford? For that matter, why didn't Mark Sanford learn from John Edwards, who paid no heed to Bill Clinton, who learned nothing from Gary Hart?

Each public misdeed should be a cautionary tale for us. Every marital indiscretion blared in the media should be a reminder to practice fidelity. Every person who is fired or reprimanded for airing their grievances on Facebook or Twitter should remind us that the internet is not private. Every celebrity pulled over for DUI should remind us not to drink and drive.

If we get caught at something, we cannot claim we didn't know any better or that we thought we'd get away with it. There are simply too many examples to feign that kind of innocence.

The only question left is, will we learn from these examples?

Sunday, March 7, 2010
Luke 13:1-5*

3rd Sunday in Lent

It's very common to raise the same kind of questions asked in these verses. We want to know why someone was killed in an auto accident, or why someone was crushed when a building collapsed. We want to know what role God played in the tragedy.

Well, if you believe God is responsible for—and ordains—every thing that happens on earth, you may not like the rest of this meditation. For I would suggest that, to wonder about God's role in a tragedy is to ignore our own role.

When Pilate mingled the blood of the Galileans with the sacrifices, that was not God's way of punishing those Galileans. That happened because Pilate was a cruel and vicious man. And when the tower of Siloam fell it was likely because the builder cut corners or because the workmen didn't follow instructions.

God gave us free will. And God honors that gift by allowing our actions—even when they're sick and evil—to disrupt God's own wishes. In other words, God allows us to sin.

So, the next time you're tempted to ask why God allowed something, ponder instead how human sin either caused the incident or made it worse.