**Daily Devotions**

**June 2022**

*06-01*

“And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.”

— Acts 1:26

**I find it interesting that the church has so long condemned various forms of conjuring or divining, including the casting of lots.** The truth is that it’s used all over the Bible to divine God’s will in a given situation. (Of course, Leviticus also strictly forbids the practice. Who says the Bible isn’t inconsistent? Not *this* theologian!)

Mind you, I’m not advocating casting lots the next time you’re faced with a tough decision and need God’s input. While I don’t consider the practice to be witchcraft by any means, I do believe it is entirely random chance and has absolutely nothing to do with God’s will. But sometimes we just want answers and we want them now. I can’t count the number of times in my life when I was faced with a decision and was paralyzed simply because there was no guaranteed outcome either way.

That’s life, isn’t it? Messy, inscrutable, unpredictable. And that’s exactly why we need God’s guidance through all of it, good and bad, up and down. But how are we to discern that guidance if not through casting lots or ouija boards or psychics? One word:

Community.

We are, each of us, a beloved child of God, a precious and holy member of God’s family, and surrounded by others in all areas of our lives who can provide us with guidance. If the first disciples believed God could speak through inanimate objects tossed on the ground, then surely we can get behind the idea that God speaks through our pastors, our mentors, our friends, our therapists, our medical professionals, our teachers, and more. Why is it so hard for so many of us to ask for help when it is through just these folks that God reaches out and gives us the loving wisdom we need to move forward.

The bad new is there are still no guarantees in life. But so far, God—through the amazing people in my life—hasn’t let me down yet.

*How do I discern what God’s will is for my life?*

*06-02*

“[Peter said] ‘For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.’”

— Acts 2:39

**I love this message of radical inclusivity.** It’s so brief and surrounded by so many other words (those early apostles could get long-winded) it’s easy to skim right over without letting the import of it hit you like a metric ton of masonry.

Up until this point, God’s favor was reserved for a relatively small, culturally-specific enclave. Peter was a member of that enclave and here was preaching to other members of that enclave. It’s possible he believed he was keeping God’s favor in the family—he hadn’t yet had his vision about the clean and unclean foods, after all. But God has a habit of speaking truth through us that sometimes we ourselves aren’t fully aware of. I think this is a case of that happening.

Because what Peter is saying is that Jesus’ love cannot be limited by time or space. It’s not just for you, but for those too young to understand, or even those not yet born. It’s not just for you, but for those too far away to hear. God reaches out through all creation and extends the call of unconditional acceptance, grace, and belonging.

Whoa.

*Have I ever said something that I only later realize had a much deeper and more important meaning than I’d thought?*

*06-03*

“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

— Acts 2:44-45

**When did we decide that this wasn’t the best way to live?** When did Christians abandon this communal living, in which all were mutually supportive, in which each gave according to their ability and each were helped according to their need?

I have a young adult in my life who needs a lot of help. She has extreme executive functioning issues, mental health challenges, and a variety of seemingly minor physical quirks which all combine to make it hard for her to “adult” in the pathologically independent way all Americans are assumed to want and be fully capable of. She feels a great deal of guilt and shame that she isn’t doing the things her same-age peers are doing, and worries she’ll never amount to anything.

Oh, honey.

When did we decide that it was okay to marginalize and shame people who don’t fit into a narrow idea of what “normal” is? How beautiful would it be if we still followed the Christian “Way of Jesus” in which they shared all things in common, and loved and supported each other in whatever need they might have? And…is there any way to get back there? For the sake of this young woman and so many thousands more like her?

*What is my experience with the ideas of independence and interdependence?*

*06-04*

“And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple.”

— Acts 3:2

**Yeah, yeah, so Peter heals someone of their disability.** But what I want to know is why on earth his life had to be reduced to people dropping him off at the fountain every day in order to beg for his survival. Who were these people dropping him off? Where was the community to support him? Didn’t we just hear yesterday about how the early Christians had all things in common—literally living “communally”?

Then there’s the issue of how the Bible and its attendant culture aggressively marginalizes the differently-abled. Is the only valid way for Peter to help this guy to “cure” him of his disability? I don’t know about you, but I know plenty of folks with physical and cognitive “disabilities” who aren’t about to be “fixed” with prayer.

Ooh! So here’s a thought. I’m just going to midrash a little right up in here, so bear with me (or don’t and come back for tomorrow’s devotion :) :) :)

Maybe Peter’s words to the beggar didn’t physically change him at all. Maybe, just maybe, the love of Jesus entered the guy so completely that his heart and spirit were filled to bursting and he “leapt” for joy through song and praise, especially when he realized the complete, unconditional welcome he received into a community of people who actually cared for one another’s lives and needs rather than just dropping them off somewhere to beg while they went about their business elsewhere. I mean…it could’ve happened that way, couldn’t it?

*How might reading the Bible through the lens of Jesus’ radical inclusivity change it for me?*

*06-05*

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.”

— Acts 2:4

**Main Idea: My faith might be strengthened by learning of the faith lives of others.**

In the book of Genesis (Gen. 11), God mixes the tongues and scatters a group of people who attempt to build a tower so tall they could make a name for themselves as the people who could reach the heavens. God did not approve of them working together for their own selfish gain, so God put a stop to it.

Here, God does the opposite. God gives everyone the ability to hear in their own language the word of Christ. While the builders of the tower of Babel wanted to exalt themselves, the words of Christ invite people to empty themselves for the exaltation of others. There’s work to be done in the world, and it can be more effectively accomplished if people work together.

As I consider this, it occurs to me I have very few friends that are not Christian. I’m not opposed to having non-Christian friends; I’ve just never taken the time or effort to find friends outside my general sphere of influence. And truthfully, I’m a little afraid to seek friends of differing cultures and religions because I’m afraid of offending them with my ignorance. It’s a tricky business. If I could muster the courage to ask questions, I might just learn something new. I might just make new friends. I might just be strengthened in my own faith as I learn of the faith lives of others.

Perhaps it’s worth a try.

*06-06*

*06-07*

*06-08*

*06-09*

*06-10*

*06-11*

*06-12*

*06-13*

*06-14*

*06-15*

*06-16*

*06-17*

*06-18*

*06-19*

*06-20*

*06-21*

*06-22*

*06-23*

*06-24*

*06-25*

*06-26*

*06-27*

*06-28*

*06-29*

*06-30*