

## **PENTECOST 4 MEDITATION JUNE 28, 2020**

Dear Friends,

"To give without any reward, or any notice, has a special quality of its own."—  
Anne Morrow Lindbergh (American author, aviator, and the wife of fellow aviator  
Charles Lindbergh, 1906-2001)

"Love is love's reward."—John Dryden (English poet, literary critic, translator, and  
playwright, made Poet Laureate in 1668, 1631-1700)

"To live for results would be to sentence myself to continuous frustration. My only  
sure reward is in my actions and not from them."—Hugh Prather (Writer, minister,  
and counselor, most famous for his first book, *Notes to Myself*, first published in  
1970, 1939-2010)

Reading these quotes, I get the feeling that these people are not doing good things  
for others solely for the resulting pleasure of feeling good about what they've done  
and about themselves. They are talking about giving one's life away for some  
purpose beyond oneself that, paradoxically, results in a gain. As Christians we  
would call that the reward of the righteous.

This Gospel message paints more detail onto the canvas of discipleship, and it  
sounds daunting. The lesson outlines the truth that acts of welcoming come at a  
cost that surpasses food, water, and shelter. They bind those who offer welcome  
integrally with those who are welcomed. These acts are not “one off” events, but  
constitute the defining feature of the mission, generating the social settings where  
God’s way is articulated, discerned, and either accepted or rejected.

*Pour forth into our hearts, strong and faithful God, the wisdom and daring of your  
Spirit, that we may take up the cross and follow Christ, willing to lose our lives for  
his sake and to manifest to the world the hope of your kingdom. We ask this  
through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity  
of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.*

*From Prayers for Sunday and Seasons, Year A, Peter J. Scagnelli, LTP, 1992.*

Faithfully, Beverly+

## PENTECOST 4 PATHWAYS

JUNE 28, 2020

**The Lessons:** Psalm 89:1-4,15-1, Jeremiah 28:5-7, Romans 6:12-23, Matthew 10:40-42

### The Collect

*Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

### DO YOU EVER CONSIDER YOURSELF VULNERABLE?

Matthew 10:40-42

*Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple-- truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."*

It's one thing to be in the position of welcoming others -- into your church, into your home, into your life. You have the power. You get to make the decisions as to whom you'll invite and when. You can control the circumstances, the setting, and the surroundings. You are able to determine when the welcoming will come to an end. It's a completely different situation, however, when find yourself on the other side -- the one being welcomed. The one at the mercy of another.

I remember when we arrived in Brasilia, Brazil as missionaries completely at the mercy of 2 long-suffering missionaries, Liz and Pat. They did the welcoming like saints and sacrificed time and energy, temporary home and meals until we found a home nearby. And we learned up close and personal all about just how vulnerable we were, and the experience was most humbling.

From this brief and seemingly benign statement of Jesus, we realize another key component of the Kingdom of Heaven -- vulnerability. Brené Brown in her book Daring Greatly defines vulnerability as "uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure."

I'd like to think that Jesus knew the true meaning of vulnerability. After all, to be human is to be vulnerable and so therefore, we should expect vulnerability to be at the very heart of the incarnation.

Yet, all too often, when vulnerability is misunderstood as weakness, the end result is a kind of leadership foreign to Jesus -- a self-absorbed, self-aggrandized sense of governance that does not inspire followers but requires an allegiance blind to empathy and hope and a commitment to self-promotion without moral purpose.

When the culture or church misinterpret vulnerability as weakness, it sidelines the very truth that could make it strong -- that God stands in solidarity with humanity and our fundamental need for connection, belonging, intimacy, and love.

Somewhere along the line, we lost our view of the fact that God becoming human was as much of a commitment to vulnerability as God's death. We have a vulnerable God. Relationships, by definition, are vulnerable. By instigating a relationship with us, God decided and determined that vulnerability is at the heart of faith.

In the face of excuses and grumblings, disbelief and disobedience, refusal and rejection, God keeps coming back, adamant that renewal is possible, certain of love for us, willing to be seen over and over again even in the face of denial and betrayal. **In the end, God had to trust in the welcome of the world to make a home here, to abide here, to make the Kingdom of Heaven be known here.**

When we start to imagine what it must feel like to rely on the welcome of others, perhaps then, we will have a sense of the kind of vulnerability Jesus knew and Jesus lived. When you have to depend on another, perhaps even for a meal and a place to sleep, trust steps through that door first. When you allow yourself to be welcomed, perhaps that can be the first step to letting go of thinking you are not enough.

Brown, Brene'. *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2012.

In Christ,

Beverly+