

ALL SAINTS CHURCH  
1250 Spear Street  
Burlington, Vermont 05403

Morning Prayer Reflection  
September 22, 2024  
Pentecost 18

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May we 'Show by our good life that our works are done with gentleness born of wisdom.' Amen...

Good morning, All Saints in the nave and on zoom. This bonus week of summer has been awesome with flowers still blooming, and pollinators still busy. Even though my hummingbirds have started their migration, the lovely voices of the Carolina wren, cardinals and other birds make music in my back garden. And yet, I struggled with this reflection more than others. I suspect that I was distracted by the secular din which seemed to dominate.

However, I got myself sorted, and understood that the common thread of the Collect, Psalm and Scripture Readings, for this 18th Sunday of Pentecost, is the struggle, battle even, between Good and Evil. I thought, how timely but then it's the message of the ages, from the beginning of human time.

In the Collect for today, we read and prayed about the juxtaposition and anxiety caused by the appeal of acquiring earthly things versus embracing heavenly values, those which endure. In the Hebrew Scripture, Jeremiah, a real 7th century BC man, shows us the angst caused by betrayal versus commitment. This is the first of Jeremiah's personal laments, when he's the unwitting object of assassination, as he prays to a loving, omnipotent God for protection.

In the Letter of James, the brother of Jesus, he implores his listeners to embrace good works done with a gentleness that is born of wisdom. 'A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.' And then, in our Gospel reading, Jesus shows us the power of humility: 'whoever wants to be first, must be last of all and servant of all'. The burden of Jesus's teaching is clear: his impending violent death, and then resurrection.

Being offered the opportunity to train for leading Morning Prayer, and then share a Reflection, has provided me with sources holy and human to quench my spiritual curiosity, at least partially.

Just a word about The Forward Day by Day commentator for September's lectionary readings: Colleen Thomas, a spiritual director and practitioner of centering prayer, who worked for a time in TV broadcasting, an often cut-throat

environment. She wrote that her way of navigating in that arena was through the integration of careful and intentional prayer. As her ambitions grew, she realized 'a more pressing need to reflect and examine' her heart, making space for God to lead her away from ego, ambition and comparison. She writes: 'I can't win a war within myself by myself. I always need God's help.'

And finally, here's the clincher: I expanded this vision to our Community at All Saints Episcopal Church. Focus if you will, on a horizontal plane: Clergy, Congregation, Eucharist, Morning Prayer, Vestry, Pastoral Care, Prayer Group, Prayer Lists, Parish Administration, Sacred Grounds and Spaces, Bazaar, Altar Guild, Coffee Hour, Church School, a colorful mosaic of Worship and Stewardship. We're all in this together as we 'Draw near to God and He draws nearer to us' Amen.

Blessings on your week ahead!

Offered by

Cheryl Hooper

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