Tuesday Morning Devotional

Diocesan Staff – September 5, 2023

**Focus** Psalm 25:4

Compel me to know your ways, O Love;

 instruct me upon your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me,

 for through You will I know wholeness;

I shall reflect your Light both day and night.

**Read** *Matthew 5:38-42*

[Jesus said,] “You all have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye’ and ‘a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you: Do not set yourself against the wicked. But when someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to them also. And when someone wants you to be judged and take your coat, let your other clothing go as well. And when someone forces you to go one mile, go the second mile too. Give to those who ask from you, and those who want to borrow from you, do not refuse.”

**Respond** *excepts from a blogpost by Pete Enns*

A confession: I’ve never taken to the term “progressive” Christianity. I don’t find it useful. Instead, I prefer “adaptive Christianity.” Why? Because it describes what we are already doing. I like “adaptive” because, at least for me, it suggests an analogy with evolution: change and increased complexity over time due to inner changes and external factors. Adapting one’s Christian faith also occurs over time due to internal spiritual/emotional factors as well as our experiences of the world around us. The result is a faith that survives by adapting and increasing in complexity – and by complexity, I don’t mean using big words and convoluted sentences, but a *growth* in faith that is marked by an increased capacity for non-binary thinking and tolerance of ambiguity.

We adapt in every aspect of our lives.

Is our understanding of God somehow shielded from this same process of adaptation?

I think not. We in fact adapt our theology throughout our lives.

More important, the histories of Judaism and Christianity, which includes their scriptures, are well-documented journeys of adaptation. The towering example of adaptation in the Hebrew Bible is the profound effect the Babylonian exile – with its loss of land, kingship, and temple – had on how Judaism would adapt again and again over the centuries. And what is Christianity if not a number of rather serious adaptations of Jewish tradition in light of a crucified and raised messiah?

“Adaptive Christianity” describes what our traditions have always done.

*You are invited to share your thoughts and feelings regarding these readings.*

*Consider:*

*How do Jesus’ “You have heard it said…but I say” teachings give direction for our own adaptive growth in faith?*

*Toward what are we growing/adapting?*

*How are you growing/adapting in your journey of faith?*

**Pray**

Aika by Joep Beving

from “The Promised Land” Soundtrack

**Close**

Let our lives be lived in growth and adaptation

a sign of Christ’s Presence.

And through us may others find The Way.

**Thanks be to God**

**Sources**

*Focus:* Psalms for Praying, first published 2007 © Nan C. Merrill

*Read: A Women’s Lectionary for the Whole Church, Year A* © 2021 by Wilda C. Gafney

Respond: Pete Enns, PH.D., Blog post, April 29, 2022, Progressive No More, from thebiblefornormalpeople.com