



A Lenten Journey through the Gospel According to John

A few minutes a day with God's word for the 40 days of Lent

(Devotions prepared by Dewey and Rev)

Let each one of us take just a few minutes each day with these devotions knowing that we are sharing with others in the life of First Presbyterian of Lancaster. Let us grow together in the love and nurture of our Lord as we prepare to celebrate His resurrection.

Monday, March 8 through Sunday, March 14, 2010

Monday, March 8

Read John 8:1-11

The Law of Moses says from Leviticus 20:10, "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." The Pharisees just bring the woman. Where is the man, didn't they know all of the Law? Jesus knows their hearts and their intentions. They are just trying to get Jesus caught breaking God's Law even though the Pharisees are the ones breaking it. It just shows us how hard their hearts are. Jesus, their Savior, is walking with them on earth yet all they care about is how they could prove he isn't the Messiah.

Jesus is the Light of the World. He exposes the darkness. The Pharisees expose the sin of the woman but Jesus exposes their sin. We all need to search our hearts to see the sin in our lives. No one on this earth is sinless. This truth should have the same effect on our lives as it did the Pharisees. It should humble us. They lost all motivation to condemn others when their own hearts condemned themselves. It made them examine themselves. The beauty of this truth is it doesn't end with the acknowledgment of our sin. Christ responds. Like the woman He doesn't condemn us but offers us forgiveness.

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you that you are a God who forgives. You don't condemn me of my faults and sins but instead you offer Christ to me. Help me to take the words you told the woman to heart. By the help of the Holy Spirit, guide me to sin no more. Guide me to true repentance. Amen.

Tuesday, March 9

Read John 8:12-20

Jesus uses the description of light to speak to the Jews about his identity. God is portrayed as light in the Old Testament. The coming of the Messiah would be a time when the Lord would be a light for his people. Isaiah 60:19 says, "The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory." Psalm 27:1 also uses this imagery saying, "The LORD is my light and my salvation." God was a pillar of fire during the Exodus out of Egypt, lighting a path out of the darkness for His people. This light is fulfilled in Christ. It is revealing his divinity. He shines brightly over sin and its darkness. When we follow Christ our path becomes clear, sin is revealed, and we begin walking the road of true life.

The reason the Pharisees bring up the need for another witness to make Jesus' statement true was because Old Testament law required more than one witness to establish the truth. Jesus knows this but isn't witnessing alone. His testimony is true because the Father also testifies with him. God the Father is the witness for His son. Of course when Jesus explains this the Pharisees couldn't understand. They don't know God or Christ. Without the true spiritual knowledge of Christ it is impossible to know the Father.

Prayer:

Lord, you are the light of the world. You shine on my life and help make me bright. Let me be a light to others who are in darkness. I thank you so much for testifying the truth on this world. Help me to trust in your testimony and know it is from God. Take over the darkness in this place. Help me to truly know you. Amen.

Wednesday, March 10

Read John 8:21-30

Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees continues with them struggling to understand his words. Jesus predicts his death and resurrection but they thought he was talking about suicide. Jesus makes it clear to them that they don't get his message because they are from below--the world. Christ is from above--the spiritual kingdom, and only those who are a part of his kingdom can understand. The truth is we are all in the Pharisees shoes, dying in sin, unless we trust in Christ. We need to be thankful to God for revealing His son to us. Without him we could never escape dying in sin.

Christ isn't making these ideas up either. Everything He says is from the Father who taught Him. That's the beauty of the Trinity. The Trinity works together and never contradicts each other because God is one. What God the Father knows, the Son knows, and the Spirit knows. Christ does nothing by his own authority but is a humble servant to his father. We should be the same, doing nothing by our own authority but living lives focused on God's will. Now that we are a part of Christ's kingdom we must be servants of it and not the earthly one.

Prayer:

Lord, I praise you for helping me understand your truth and message. I thank you for showing me your plan and purpose for Jesus. Help me always to remember it is by your hand that I understand these things. I thank you that you didn't leave me to die in sin but you destroyed the power of sin and death by Christ. All praise and glory to you Lord. Amen.

Thursday, March 11

Read John 8:31-59

Christ hits three main points in this section of scripture. The first is abiding in the word. All believers, being Christ's disciples, need to abide in the word of Jesus. We need to be reading the word, speaking the word, and living the word. It is a gift from God to us. It helps us understand more about God and more about ourselves. With the word we know the truth that truly sets us free from sin.

The second point concerns being a slave to sin. Sin is a prison. It is slavery. Many people might think they are living their lives the way they want, but sin is really their master. They have no freedom to say no. They don't know when to stop. It destroys their lives. Without Christ freeing us from this bondage we would have remain enslaved forever. Christ truly sets us free so we can live lives that can say no to the world and sin. Our lives now can follow the path of righteousness. We can let go of sin and live free.

The third point is being a descendent of Abraham. Abraham was a man who understood following God but many of his descendents did not. Christ makes it clear, if the Pharisees were truly apart of Abraham's family they would know Christ. Abraham rejoiced for the coming of the Lord, the Pharisees should, too. Christ tells them He is God by saying He was before Abraham. Christ is eternal, but the Pharisees still couldn't grasp this.

Prayer:

Lord, I pray that I can be a person who abides in your word. Help me to have a passion to read it. Help me to understand it. Help me to love it. Guide me away from sin and the slavery it brings. Let me always remember and focus on the freedom that is found in Christ. It is only through your son that I can be free and become adopted into Abraham's family. I praise you for making this possible. Amen.

Friday, March 12

Read John 9:1-41

Christ's disciples ask him if the blind man is blind because of his own and parents' sins. They ask this because they believe that people are punished physically for their sins and that generations are affected by the sins of their fathers. Think about the people of Israel during the Exodus. When the Israelites worshipped the golden calf God punished that specific generation so that no one expected Joshua and Caleb to enter the promise land. Not even Moses was allowed to enter.

Christ's response to the disciples has hope. This man is blind so the works of God might be displayed in him. He could not see because Christ was going to use this man to show God to others. Sometimes life has people like this. We don't know why people are born with disabilities or health problems, but maybe it is to show God to others. Think about the truth that we are all born with sin. We all have spiritual problems but now Christ uses that to show God to others. The blind man believes at the end of this chapter. We were also blind, blind to the truth, but God showed us his work through Christ. We, like the blind man, can now see.

The Pharisees are the real blind men. They don't see the Messiah who stands right next to them. They don't see the truth. They hate Christ for healing on the Sabbath and they don't see themselves as sinners. They call themselves disciples of Moses but if they truly are they would follow Christ like Moses did. Hebrews 11:26 says, "Moses considered the riches of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward." They couldn't see like Moses.

Prayer:

Lord, I once was blind, but by your grace I can now see. I thank you that you chose to show your works in me. I can now see your grace and love so clear because my eyes have been opened to the truth. Help me continue to fix my eyes on Jesus, looking to the reward like Moses did. I pray for the blind of this world that their eyes will be opened. Father, use me as a tool for you to help the blind see. Amen.

Saturday, March 13

Read John 10:1-18

Christ is the door of our salvation. There is no other way to pass through. There is no other way to enter heaven. God chose Christ to be the way. Anyone who follows another way is a thief and a robber. All the other religions try to steal God's glory by saying they have the way of salvation. They try to break and destroy the truth. They boast in themselves and their works. We once trusted other doors and other ways. We now see the folly in them. We now trust in God for our salvation. Anyone who trusts in Christ for salvation is a part of his flock. We enter through his door by having faith in him. The door of Christ brings life and it is abundant. The door of the thief brings death.

Christ is our good shepherd. He protects and watches over us. He is not just a hired hand doing it for money. Christ was appointed by the Father and wanted to be our shepherd. He lays down his life for us not because he was forced to or because he had to, Christ wanted to. He lays it down on his own accord. He has the authority to do so which was given from the Father.

Christ uses these terms about shepherds and sheep because it connects with his culture. God has been called the good shepherd in the Old Testament. Many of Israel's strong and faithful rulers or priests were viewed as shepherds. David, one of Israel's best kings, was a shepherd before he became king. These statements aren't something Christ just makes up because they sound good. These statements are meant to connect with the people of that time, especially the Jews.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you are the only way to enter your kingdom. You are the door of salvation. You are my shepherd. You died for me. I praise you for your faithfulness to your sheep. I thank you for bringing me into your family. Help me always remember the sacrifice of Christ for his sheep. Help me to never trust any other way but yours. Amen.

Sunday, March 14

Read John 10:19-42

The Jews of these verses aren't the only ones debating who Jesus is. We still see people today holding different views. Some say he is a great prophet. Others say he is just a crazy man. Others say he is a good teacher on morality like Gandhi. We say he is the Christ. Christ made it plain to the Jews of his day and he makes it plain to us but many still don't believe. For those who do believe, they hear his voice and follow. Our reward is eternal life and we will never perish or be taken out of the hand of God. No one is more powerful than God, so once you are in Christ's hand you're in for life. We will be his sheep forever. Our relationship with God is eternal, death has no power anymore. Nothing can separate us from the love of God because it is God who offers that love. It is not in our hands but God's hands. That's the beauty of Christianity. Praise the Lord for that.

The Jews seem tired of his stories and statements. They ask Jesus to tell them if he is the Christ. He responds, "I and the Father are one." He tells them he is God. These men, not being Christ's sheep, refuse to believe it and would rather see him dead. They said no one can call themselves God but Jesus responds with Psalm 82:6 which says, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you." This psalm is referring to government rulers and kings, gods of this world. These men didn't understand the scriptures and Christ called them on it. Jesus basically asks these men if they would call out God for blaspheming. Of course they wouldn't. It shows the importance of knowing the Scriptures so we won't make false statements like the men in these verses. If we do not know the Scriptures we might be deceived like these men were.

Prayer:

Lord, you hold me in your hand and you will never let go of me. I thank you for the security that is found in your son. I praise you that death is not our end but our beginning. Help me always to trust in you holding my life together in your hand. Help me to know your word teaches this. Give me a spirit of understanding when it comes to your word. To you all the praise and glory, Father. Amen.