*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

February 4 - 9

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Monday, February 4 John 6:1-15**

*“Jesus feeds the 5,000”*

 Accepting the boy’s gift of five barley loaves and two small fish, Jesus gives thanks. And in the mystery of that blessing, the small becomes great. They all received “as much as they wanted.” With Jesus there is always enough and more! What a lesson in God’s sovereign, gracious provision for these timid, hesitant disciples who were now given the honor of bringing this meal out to the people on the hillside.

 The crowd responds to this miraculous sign by insisting he must be the Prophet, the return of Elijah or one greater. Would not this new Prophet give them permanent physical security, full bellies and instant healing, and supply all their bodily needs? So they will make him their king on their terms, requiring him to fulfill their expectations! But Jesus will have none of this, so he walks away from the crowd to be alone again. He has come to call people to radical, costly discipleship, not to a kingdom of bread. He will be King only of those who enter by the narrow door of humble surrender to God’s will.

*As my King, Jesus, I seek your Kingdom goals for my life. Amen.*

**Tuesday, February 5 John 6:16-24**

*“It is I; do not be afraid”*

 The disciples must have been baffled by the turn of events. Why would Jesus walk away from a great opportunity to enlist a whole army of disciples if he were really serious about his new kingdom movement? But they let him go off alone and apparently agreed to meet him later in or near Capernaum. So, these disciples push out to cross the sea, but shortly find themselves in dire straits. Darkness and a violent wind and a heavy sea are suddenly about to overwhelm them. And Jesus is not with them. What a picture of our contemporary existence – it is a dark, stormy night at sea, and there does not seem to be anyone in the boat who can save us.

 But in the midst of this violent Galilean storm, a barely visible figure can be seen walking on the water toward their boat. John tells us that they were terrified. But then they hear that strong, familiar voice, “It is I; do not be afraid.” And they eagerly receive him into the boat. Jesus is giving these men the powerful assurance of his presence. He will be to them all that “It is I” can mean, however dark and stormy any night may become.

*You are with me, Jesus, and there is nothing that I need to fear. Amen.*

**Wednesday, February 6 John 6:25-34**

*“Believe in the one God has sent”*

 As tasty and nourishing as the loaves and fish may have been, it is food which perishes. The whole digestive process, so necessary to sustain physical life, is part of an order that will pass away. How foolish then to make the provision of food that spoils the reason for following Jesus. However, there is a food which “endures to everlasting life.” It feeds the deepest center of human existence, the spiritual self, and continues to satisfy. This food is not a reward that can be earned by human effort, but is given by the Son of Man, whose origin is in heaven. He is the authentic Source of this everlasting bread.

 Still these people do not understand who it is that has fed them, nor the meaning of this gift. They only seem to hear the phrase “work for food” and assume there are more good deeds they must do to please God. But the food that Jesus shares is given by the Father. It is a work of grace, food that cannot be earned, only received. So the “work of God” is the response of faith, believing in the One whom the Father has sent, receiving what he has to give.

*I believe in you, Jesus, as the One sent by God the Father. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

February 4 - 9

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Thursday, February 7 John 6:35-50**

*“I am the bread of life”*

 Jesus is “living bread,” as once before he offered “living water.” The Father’s will is that everyone will look upon the Son, believe, and have life eternal. Further, those who have come to Jesus and believe will never be lost. The identity of this “bread of life” is actually Jesus, just as the object of faith now should be Jesus.

 But this is the great turning point that the synagogue audience cannot bear. It is one thing to say that we should have faith in God and be fed by him, but it is quite another for Jesus to say that he is the source of that meal, the object of belief. The crowds begin to grumble against Jesus. They see merely a man, the son of Jewish parents coming from a commonplace Jewish family. Jesus addresses the problem of their lack of spiritual receptivity. The idea of Jesus’ divine origin and descent is impossible for the crowd to accept unless God in some fashion illumines them. God must move the inner heart of a person before he or she can see the things of God. And this takes place on God’s initiative.

*Your Father has drawn me to you, Jesus, and I have eternal life. Amen.*

**Friday, February 8 John 6:51-58**

*“This bread is my flesh”*

 Jesus is the living bread that came down, referring to the Son becoming human, and one must eat this bread, referring to the decisive moment when one believes. Then Jesus makes an amazing statement: “This bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh.” Jesus is flesh offered in sacrifice. The gift of this bread, this flesh, will come with his death, and it is given for the life of the world. Jesus will give *himself* as a blood sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. We are reminded of John the Baptist in chapter one who described Jesus as the “Lamb of God” referring to Jesus as sacrifice.

 The crowds are aghast when Jesus tells them they need to eat his flesh and drink his blood. Of course, Jesus is not proposing religious cannibalism. Earthly symbols must be converted into spiritual truths. It is Jesus’ later last meal with his disciples before his crucifixion which brings understanding. To eat his flesh and drink his blood is to participate, by faith, in his sacrifice on the cross, a sacrifice necessary for our salvation.

*By faith, Jesus, I accept your sacrifice for me on the cross. Amen.*

**Saturday, February 9 John 6:59-71**

*“Many of his disciples turned away and deserted him”*

Jesus’ revelation causes the crowds to grumble, and it offends many of his own disciples. For them this is not simply a difficult teaching but is something unacceptable, and it creates a turning point in Jesus’ ministry as it sifts his followers: Some of them fall away and refuse to follow him any longer while Judas Iscariot, though he remains with the Twelve, perhaps finds in this a catalyst for his own personal rebellion and betrayal.

 With some of his following now collapsing, Jesus turns to the Twelve to inquire if they wish to depart as well. The mystery of his person and work has now been laid out in full. For Peter this difficult exchange provides an opportunity to give a courageous confession. Jesus recognizes the confession not simply as a tribute to Peter’s courage but also as evidence of God’s supernatural movement in his life. These deeper things cannot be embraced by everyone, only by those whom God has enabled and called. God’s entry into the world in Christ is not the only act of grace; God must also empower men and women to see it and embrace it.

*You, Jesus, have the words of life and I will always follow you. Amen.*