*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

January 21 - 26

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Monday, January 21 John 3:1-8**

*“He came to speak with Jesus”*

How fascinating that a member of the “Who’s Who of Jerusalem” should seek out Jesus, a rustic itinerant preacher. Could Jesus have anything in common with Nicodemus, a man with impeccable credentials? John describes Nicodemus as a Pharisee, which meant that he was one of the separated ones, an elite lay theologian dedicated to studying and living out every jot and title of the law, and a “ruler of the Jews,” meaning he was a member of the Sanhedrin, that exclusive council which controlled the religious life of Israel.

Nicodemus had come because of all that had been going on. The dramatic cleansing of the temple and the works that followed had created quite a stir. There is a humility in the way he comes. He addresses Jesus as “Rabbi,” a title of respect he would use only because he believed he could learn something from this new teacher. He says, “We know” – perhaps he came to voice some of the questions being raised by a group within the Pharisees. By what authority was Jesus doing these things? What was his purpose? Did he have some new truth to reveal?

*What you do, Jesus, causes us to want to learn who you are. Amen.*

**Tuesday, January 22 John 3:9-21**

*“The Son of Man must be lifted up”*

To clarify his own identity and the meaning of his coming down from heaven, Jesus refers to a peculiar incident in the life of Moses when the children of Israel expressed their unbelief. In response, God sent serpents among them that brought disease and death, and the people repented and cried out, “We have sinned.” The Lord then offered salvation. He commanded Moses to make a serpent of bronze and to hang it on a pole. The people who had been bitten could be healed only by lifting up their eyes and looking at the serpent. They would be saved by an act of faith.

So Jesus, the Son of Man, has come to be lifted up on a pole. This Jesus, who is also the Son of God, has made his descent from heaven and is now human. He will, in obedience to his Father, die on a cross. This amazing and costly sacrifice calls forth the response of faith. Whoever will look to him on the cross with eyes of faith will be given everlasting life. This is God’s amazing provision for our salvation.

*You came from heaven to earth, Jesus, to die for me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, January 23 John 3:22-36**

*“He must become greater”*

Following his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus and his followers move into the regions east of Jerusalem where he conducts a ministry much like that of John the Baptist, teaching about the Kingdom of God and baptizing people for the repentance of sin. Two things about this baptizing should be noted: first, this is not *Christian* baptism for the Holy Spirit has not yet been given. Second, it was Jesus’ disciples, not Jesus himself, who was baptizing (see John 4:2). Imagine the sort of elitism that could have developed in the ancient church between those baptized by Jesus and those baptized by someone else.

John the Baptist had followers who knew about Jesus’ popularity. They were envious of his fame, unhappy that Jesus was becoming a celebrated figure seemingly at the expense of their leader. John’s response shows there is no rivalry. God has provided the ministry enjoyed by Jesus, and any “success” he experiences is from God. Above all, John affirms that he is not the Christ but his forerunner. John must always play a secondary role.

*I rejoice, Jesus, when people turn to you and praise your name. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

January 21 - 26

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Thursday, January 24 John 4:1-15**

*“A Samaritan woman came to draw water”*

The key to the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman is not so much her background (except that she is unacceptable to traditional Judaism as a Samaritan and isolated from the community of women due to her relationship with men) as it is her attitude to Jesus. John invites us to step into her shoes, to marvel at Jesus’ interest, and to examine the themes he raises. We should take careful note that Jesus even speaks to her at all.

Travelling through Samaria on his way to Galilee, Jesus comes to a traditional well associated with one of Israel’s greatest heroes, Jacob, and he offers what Jacob never could: living water (interpreted as the Holy Spirit) that gives the one who drinks eternal life. No self-respecting rabbi in the first century would have spoken to a woman in this setting. But Jesus delights in breaking traditional cultural barriers that separate people. He takes a risk. He reaches out. He speaks. And, John would have us reflect, if Jesus is willing to speak to her, who won’t he speak to in the first century or today?

*You offer living water to all, Jesus, regardless of socio-economic status. Amen.*

**Friday, January 25 John 4:16-30**

*“Worship in Spirit and in truth”*

The woman brings up the competition between Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim. While the Jews insisted that worship of God take place in the Jerusalem temple, the Samaritans claimed that their mountain was the proper place of worship. Abraham and Jacob had both built altars on Gerizim, and tradition held that it was on this mountain that Abraham had come to sacrifice his son Isaac. Jesus moves beyond the old resentments between the two peoples. It is no longer a question of Jerusalem or Gerizim, but of being rightly related to the One we worship.

Truth and Spirit are at the center of living worship. Knowing *who* it is we worship is of utmost importance. But it is not only Whom we worship, in truth, but in *what way*, by what spirit, we worship Him. God, whose essence is Spirit, will share His Holy Spirit, through the Son, at the completion of the Son’s work. The water which Jesus offers the woman will spring up into everlasting life, freeing her from her attachment to Mount Gerizim and bringing her into authentic worship of the Living God.

*The Spirit, Jesus, brings us into truth, and the truth draws us into the Spirit. Amen.*

**Saturday, January 26 John 4:31-42**

*“Now we believe”*

The woman faithfully tells her own people what has happened to her, and many believed in Jesus because of this woman’s witness. It caused them to come to him, which is the chief purpose of anyone’s witness. These Samaritans are spiritually thirsty, longing for living water. All prejudices are brushed aside as they urge the Jewish Traveler, who has had such a profound effect on this needy woman, to stay with them. This is no surface invitation, but an urgent cry. “Come and live with us.”

The Word made human now makes his home among these estranged and needy people. And while it was only two days, what a rich, full time it became. A few hours with eternal consequences as it was Jesus’ word that people heard, and they came to believe in the one who shared the word. Faith is never faith if it is based only on someone else’s testimony, however amazing it may be. No, saving faith comes by hearing the word of the Messiah and trusting him. Jesus had come for them!

*Having heard your word, Jesus, I have placed my trust in you. Amen.*