*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

July 3 - 8

“Meditate on our Reading”

**Monday, July 3 Psalm 119:57-72**

*“Teach me your laws”*

 When the psalmist prays, “Teach me your laws,” he doesn’t merely mean “acquaint me with the content of your laws.” Israelites knew very well that they were supposed to worship God alone, to not make idols, to not profane God’s name, to keep the Sabbath holy, and so on. If they had a question about lesser laws, such as which animals they may or may not eat, they could go and ask a priest. They did not need God to teach them in this sense. Nor do we. We know quite well God’s general rules for our lives. The question is whether we will obey them.

 God’s commands go against the grain. It is more comfortable to worship several gods and thus be able to hedge your bets, to worship an idol rather than the real thing, to attach God’s name to your commitments, or to work 24/7 so you can get that next promotion. How then does God answer the psalmist’s prayer to teach us? One of the psalm’s unwelcome answers is that suffering and hardship can push us to more trust and openness to what God needs to teach us. “It was good for me to be afflicted, so that I might learn your laws.”

*Help me to put into practice, Lord, what you command. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 4 Psalm 119:73-80**

*“You created me”*

 The psalmist prays that God will give him understanding so he can learn obedience to God’s commands, and he gives God a reason for doing so: “You created me.” Whenever you make something - a meal in the kitchen, a car that runs again in the garage, a birdhouse in your workshop - do you not favor the work of your hands? And shall not the Lord much more love his creation, especially human beings, his most excellent creation? And, is not an element of the love of God which first loved us that it desires for us to love him in return? And, do we not love him best when we keep his commands?

 It is always right for the child of God to pray and ask that God help him or her to become what God desires. To live in obedience to God’s commands is not merely up to us to do as well as we possibly can in our own strength and by our own determination. That will only get us so far. To go all the way, to love God with *all* our heart, soul, mind and strength, we need the help of the one who made us.

*To be all that I can be in you, Lord, I humbly ask for your help. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 5 Psalm 119:81-88**

*“I am like a wineskin in the smoke”*

 The psalmist is in pain. His enemies, be they human in nature or life’s difficult circumstances, have brought him to a place of anguish and depression. His graphic metaphor, “I am like a wineskin in the smoke,” refers to the skins used for containing wine, when emptied, being hung up in the tent, and when the place filled with smoke from the cooking fire, the skins grew black and sooty, and in the heat they became wrinkled and worn. So, says the author, his troubles have worn him down and dried him out.

 But, he declares, he has not forgotten God’s principles and he will continue to follow them. In spite of current dryness, he maintains his faith and is patient in waiting for God’s deliverance. God’s promises are before him, and he knows that God will remain faithful to him and never leave or forsake him, even in his darkest times. Knowing that God is holding on to him, he continues to hold on to God. And, as he holds on to God’s commands, he prays for God’s salvation – not as wishful thinking but as certain hope.

*In my darkest hour, Lord, your Word is with me and gives me hope. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

July 3 - 8

“Meditate on our Reading”

**Thursday, July 6 Psalm 119:89-104**

 *“Your word, O Lord, is eternal”*

 Having focused on the changing nature of his personal fortunes in the previous verses, and having lamented how difficult life can be in its ups and downs and in its susceptibility to the slings and arrows of evil people, and how waiting on the Lord to come to our rescue can be hard, the psalmist now turns to the joyful contemplation of God’s word. Having tossed about on a sea of trouble he now steps onto the shore and stands firmly upon a rock.

 God’s word is not fickle or uncertain; it is settled, determined, fixed, sure, immovable. Human teachings change constantly, as those who are currently living are invariably convinced that they know better than those who have gone before. “Newer is better” has always been a cultural mantra, and that includes new beliefs. But the Lord’s word is from of old the same, and will remain unchanged eternally. While there are those who enjoy spouting new ideas because others find them unsettling, this is not God’s way. “God said it – that settles it – I believe it.” This truth is worthy of praise and gratitude.

*Your word, Lord, is the solid foundation for my life. Amen.*

**Friday, July 7 Psalm 119:105-112**

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path”*

 As we journey through this world, we will often encounter its darkness. Let us never venture there without the light-giving word of God, lest we slip and stumble off God’s path. Each one of us need to use God’s word personally, practically, and consistently, that we may see our way and be aware of what lies in it. Without Scripture we can neither know the way not how to walk in it. Additionally, God’s word helps us to detect trouble along the way.

 By the light of God’s word, the psalmist has become aware of the snare that the wicked have placed in his path. This can be a particular instance of temptation to turn away from God’s commands, but it is also true of the spiritual life in general. The life of faith is the scene of constant danger, and it is not easy to live consistently obedient to God. Jesus told his disciples that they would be hated by the world, and the Apostle Paul spoke of the spiritual warfare that every follower of Jesus will be forced to be engaged in if he or she is determined to remain true to their Lord and Savior. In this present darkness, we need the light that is God’s word.

*I am constantly in your Word, Lord, for it is a light for my path. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 8 Mark 2:1-12**

*“Son, your sins are forgiven”*

 I wonder what the four men were thinking when, having dropped their paralyzed friend through the roof, they heard Jesus say, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” They had not brought their friend to Jesus to have his sins forgiven but to have him healed. Most of us would be put off by any doctor who made this announcement to us when we came for some medical treatment. We are accustomed to view disease as something caused by a virus, bacterium or other pathogen and best remedied by medicine, not the forgiveness of sins. We are convinced that health results from eating right – high fiber, low cholesterol – exercising right, taking the right medicine that three out of four doctors recommend, and having disease-resistant genes.

 Perhaps we are too quick in our modern world to dismiss any connection between physical and spiritual healing. Could it be that the God who created us, giving us both our physical bodies and our spiritual souls, did it in such a way that there is a connection between the two? The God who offers forgiveness of sin, bringing spiritual healing, is also the God who offers physical healing.

*Bless me with wholeness I pray, Lord, spiritually and physically. Amen.*