*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

June 12 - 17

“Take and Eat”

**Monday, June 12 Ezekiel 2:8 – 3:3**

*“Eat this scroll”*

Throughout history, mystics have sought to experience visions of God. They have often gone to great lengths in their pursuit of this ultimate experience, subjecting their bodies to innumerable hardships in order to attain to a great spiritual “high.” In contrast, God comes to Ezekiel entirely unsought and reveals himself to the prophet not for the sake of giving him the spiritual experience to end all spiritual experiences but rather to commission him for the task of taking God’s message to the people.

Like the first Adam, Ezekiel faces a test of obedience that revolves around the idea of eating, though in his case he is to eat whatever the Lord commands him to rather than to abstain from eating what the Lord prohibits. What Ezekiel is given to eat is a scroll covered on both sides with words of lament and mourning and woe. But though its appearance is unattractive, to the obedient eater it tastes as sweet as honey. By consuming the scroll, a metaphor for internalizing the Word of God, Ezekiel is being equipped as God’s messenger.

*I obediently take in your Word, Lord, that I may be equipped for ministry. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 13 Revelation 10:1-11**

*“I took the scroll and ate it”*

Ezekiel had been told to eat a scroll from the Lord and then to go to his people and speak God’s Word to them. Ezekiel’s experience, except for one detail, is identical to the experience of John, the author of Revelation. While both Ezekiel and John eat their respective scrolls and find the taste sweet as honey, John adds than in his stomach it becomes bitter. Like Ezekiel, John is commissioned to proclaim the Word from God contained in the scroll. It is a message that is both bitter and sweet. Hope and judgment are bound together.

The message of judgment and the message of hope have always been united together in the prophetic teaching of the Old and New Testaments. Jeremiah sees a vast boiling cauldron which is an omen of judgment; yet within the same vision Jeremiah sees an almond branch which is the sign of hope in the midst of winter. The stern John the Baptist proclaimed a bitter message that challenges sin while pointing to the sweet forgiveness that is found in Jesus. We are commissioned to tell the whole message of God, the whole truth – it is both bitter and sweet.

*Your Word, Lord, addresses the consequence of sin and the glory of grace. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 14 Jeremiah 15:16-21**

*“When your words came, I ate them”*

Jeremiah describes his encountering God’s Word with the claim that he ate them and they became his joy. This refers to his willing acceptance of God’s previous revelation to him (see Jeremiah 1:9). But, having shared the Word with the people, many have become his enemies. They have also become God’s enemies, for it is God’s Word that they reject. Having experienced joy when he received the Word, he now feels despair and rejection at the hands of the people. They have not received God’s Word with joy.

God’s reply is not to deal with the particulars of Jeremiah’s complaint by telling him everything will be okay, but to remind him that the path of the faithful and obedient prophet is still open to him. Jeremiah has not failed, nor has God failed Jeremiah. Rather, God has called him to prophesy in this historical hour of judgment, and Jeremiah is receiving the “reward” typical for a prophet who announces judgment (i.e., persecution; see Matthew 5:10-11). Jeremiah is to focus on God’s promises, not on the people’s opposition.

*In spite of opposition, Lord, I will remain faithful to your Word. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

June 12 - 17

“Take and Eat”

**Thursday, June 15 Psalm 19:7-11**

*“Sweeter than honey”*

The psalm considers how the “law of the Lord” (literally, the *Torah*, the first five books of the Bible) fulfills the role of warning and reward in the life of the faithful (see verse 11). The section consists, for the most part, of a series of adjectives describing the character of Torah, each accompanied by a verbal phrase revealing how Torah impacts the life of the faithful. Along the way, the function of the “law of the Lord” is expanded by a series of nouns and phrases that broaden our understanding of its purpose.

Too often Christians think of the Old Testament Torah (law) as legalistic restrictions of behavior that must be obeyed. In this viewpoint Christ has freed us from bondage to the law of obedience – we are saved *not* because we keep the law but because we believe in the saving death of Jesus Christ. While the statement above concerning the Christian view of grace is accurate, the view of the law described is too narrow and one-sided. As the Psalm suggests, God’s law is not an onerous burden but instead a source of wisdom, joy, and light, both precious and pleasurable.

*Your law, Lord, is sweet to me for it helps me live my best life. Amen.*

**Friday, June 16 Psalm 1:1-6**

*“His delight is in the law of the Lord”*

If we truly wish to follow God’s way rather than a path that leads to destruction, how do we set about finding it? In the New Testament, toward the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns his hearers, in words similar to the conclusion of Psalm 1, that entering the kingdom of heaven is like choosing between a broad, well-trodden roadway and a barely distinguishable footpath. The incentive to find and take the narrow path is that is leads ultimately to life, while the broad and easy road ends in destruction (see Matthew 7:13-14). But how does one find this path of life in order to enter it? And once on the road, what map ensures we won’t get lost?

Jesus’ response to such questions comes at the end of his sermon: don’t just hear my words but do them. Psalm 1offers the same warning: Hear and do. Delight in God’s Word, meditate on it, and act. Let what you hear, read, and study so permeate your being that your life takes up residence on the path that God knows and exudes a character that sets it clearly apart from the wicked, sinners, and mockers of verse 1. Such a person is truly blessed.

*I will act on your Word, Lord, doing the will of the Father. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 17 Joshua 1:6-9**

*“Meditate on it day and night”*

God has promised to be with Joshua, but Joshua must strive to act like one in partnership with God. In order to do so, Joshua must, in the first place, be strong and of a good courage; and in the second place, he must make the book of the law his continual study and guide. In this way he will fulfill the conditions of a well-lived life - "then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

The habit of meditation on the law which Joshua was instructed to practice was of great value to one who was to lead a busy life. No mere cursory perusal of the Bible can secure the ends for which it is given. Our memory is treacherous, the heart is careless, and the power of worldly objects to withdraw our attention from the things of God is relentless. We must be continually in contact with the Book of God through daily reading and thoughtful contemplation, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit for its application in the events of each day.

*I partner with you, Lord, by constantly meditating on your Book. Amen.*