*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

June 26 – July 1

“Read the Bible”

**Monday, June 26 Psalm 119:1-8**

*“Happy are those who obey his decrees”*

 These first eight verses of the psalm are taken up with a contemplation of the happiness (literally, “blessedness”) that comes from keeping the commands of God as revealed in his Word. The psalmist is not so much teaching about the particulars of following God’s commands as he is expressing devotion to God and a heart-felt fellowship with God through a love of God’s will as it is expressed in the Bible. He is happy and he is thankful, because God has given him a clear way to live his life.

 Those who love God’s Holy Word are happy because they are able to live with integrity before the Lord. To say that one is a follower of Jesus Christ but then to live according to one’s own preferences and desires is to be a hypocrite. To know and to follow God’s will is to live like Jesus lived, in obedience to his heavenly Father. We can become like Christ precisely because we know, through his Word, what God wills for us. Thus, our prayer, like the psalmist’s, is that our actions would consistently reflect God’s principles for living.

*I am happy, Lord, to live my very best life by following your Word. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 27 Psalm 119:9-24**

*“I have hidden your word in my heart”*

 Here the psalmist prays as a young person facing the temptations of the world which seek to lead him astray (verse 9), as a servant of God who desires to live according to his Master’s word (verse 17), and as a foreigner living in a foreign land of those who, unlike himself, disregard the Word of God (verse 19). How will he be able to keep his way pure? How will he remain true to his Master? How will he avoid following the world’s teaching?

 “I have hidden your word in my heart.” His heart will be kept close to God by the Word of God because he has kept the Word of God close to his heart. Scripture is not merely a text to be read or listened to. It is like a treasure to be kept safe in a treasure chest, or like a precious seed to be buried in a fruitful soil. There, from his heart, God’s Word can be spoken by him to others; there, in his heart, God’s Word can be meditated upon; there, kept in his heart, God’s Word will not be forgotten; there, because God’s Word is the strength of his heart, he will not be overwhelmed by the words of those who speak against God and his children.

*May your Word, Lord, take up permanent residence in my heart. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 28 Psalm 119:25-32**

*“My soul is weary with sorrow”*

 In the ancient near-east, mourners poured dust on their heads and sat in ashes as a sign of sorrow, a sorrow that for the psalmist is intense enough to raise the question of whether it would not be better for him to be dead. While he does not tell us the source of his sorrow, it seems to be connected with some kind of failure to keep God’s Word. Perhaps he has knowingly disobeyed God, fooling himself into thinking that he better than God knows what is best for him, but now coming to the realization how wrong he has been. He has been lying to himself but, having come to his senses, he prays that God will preserve and encourage him by his Word.

 He pledges himself anew to be faithful to God’s Word, to be obedient to God’s commands, to follow God’s principles. Yes, he has failed and God has every right to withhold mercy, but he remembers the promises of God that God will be faithful even when his people are unfaithful. As he comes to the end of his meditation, he declares that with God’s help he will be able to joyfully run again. What a change from lying prostrate in the dust!

*When I fail your Word, Lord, I pray for forgiveness and you lift me up. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

June 26 – July 1

“Read the Bible”

**Thursday, June 29 Psalm 119:33-48**

 *“My heart . . . my eyes . . . my mouth”*

 The psalmist prays that God not only teach him his Word, but that God give him understanding of that Word. To know what the Word says is not the same as understanding it. As Jesus pointed out to the teachers of religious law, they knew the content of God’s Word but not its true meaning: “You have heard it said [by these teachers of the law], but I say to you . . .” (Matthew 5). Once God’s Word is understood, the heart is convinced of its truth and puts it into practice. However, the heart of a person can be swayed by his or her eyes, for what we see in this world (especially riches and what they can purchase for us) can cause our heart to go astray. So, the psalmist asks the Lord to turn his eyes from worthless things.

 With understanding of God’s Word in our heart and keeping our eyes from dwelling on things which have the potential to deaden our souls to that very Word, our mouths will speak the truth of God as directed by our heart. No longer will we be intimidated by those who would seek to shame our confidence in God’s Word; we will even speak his Word to kings!

*As you give me understanding of your Word, Lord, I grow in confidence. Amen.*

**Friday, June 30 Psalm 119:49-56**

*“Remember”*

 Retrospection is the theme of these verses, indicated by the three-fold use of the verb “remember.” First, the psalmist asks God to remember God’s promises. He is not asking for new promises from God, as if God’s Word were insufficient for whatever he is currently dealing with, but having brought God’s Word into his heart, he knows that it is complete in its ability to meet his every need. Notice that he does not say “remember my service” but “remember your Word to me.” We do much better to rely on God’s Word than on our good deeds.

 Having asked God to remember his promises, the psalmist declares that he will remember God’s “ancient laws” (verse 52) and “name” (verse 55). This he is able to do for the “ancient laws” have been revealed by God and recorded in his Word as a record for us to read and live by. Similarly, his “name,” that is, his personhood and character as God, is known to us because he has chosen to show it to us. While we do not know all there is to know about God, although one day we will see him “face to face,” what he has revealed is enough for us to be his child.

*I look back on all you have taught me, Lord, and I am grateful. Amen.*

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

*“Four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat”*

 Like so many other encounters between Jesus and the crowds of people who flocked to him, a person with a physical disability is brought to Jesus for healing. The house is so packed with people that the paralyzed man’s friends find it impossible to get him close to Jesus. Undaunted by the human barrier before them, they dig through the roof and lower the man into the middle of the crowd. We can only imagine how horrified the owner of the house is by this destructive invasion of his property.

 What is also “invaded” is the teaching of Jesus and the religious sensibilities of the teachers of religious law. But, while the teachers are horrified by Jesus’ words of forgiveness, Jesus is touched by the faith of these men and seemingly unconcerned that his teaching has been interrupted. While taking the time to have a conversation with the teachers of religious law about their theology of forgiveness, Jesus doesn’t forget the man in need of healing. Turning to him, Jesus says: “Stand up, take your mat, and go on home, because you are healed.”

*You are never too busy, Lord, to pay attention to my needs. Amen.*