*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

September 11 - 16

“The Miracles and Death of Christ”

**Monday, September 11 Acts 2:22-23**

*“You put him to death by nailing him to a cross”*

 Peter’s presentation of the gospel begins with a reference to the miracles of Christ as evidence that he was accredited by God. Next, Peter presents the death of Christ as having been caused by the audience, but also as being according to God’s set purpose. We see here, as is often the case in Scripture, the paradox between divine providence and human responsibility. While God planned for Christ to die on the cross, those who carried out this act were responsible for it.

 The New Testament presents the death of Christ as a victory that had been planned by God. In was not the unfortunate defeat of a good man who had no power to save himself from such a death. In his trial and crucifixion, Jesus marched on, amidst pain and humiliation, as a strong man who had the situation under his control. When he introduced himself to the guards who had come to arrest him in the garden, for example, they drew back and fell to the ground. From the cruelly painful cross he pronounced salvation to a thief, asked God to forgive his crucifiers, and made arrangements for his mother’s care.

*Your death, Lord, was not a defeat or a tragedy but a triumph. Amen.*

**Tuesday, September 12 John 2:1-11**

*“He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him”*

 In a small village north of Nazareth called Cana, Jesus and his disciples appear at a wedding. When asked, he performs his first “sign,” changing water into wine. John consistently refers to Jesus’ mighty works as “signs.” A sign is revelatory, disclosing something from God, something hidden before. The signs are not merely acts of power and might; they unveil that God is at work in Jesus and indeed is present in him. Thus John remarks that through this sign Jesus revealed his glory.

 John makes an important connection between the sign (the miracle of water into wine) and the belief of the disciples. Does this mean that experiencing the miraculous is an avenue to faith? To be sure, many people (and demons, for that matter) saw Jesus’ miracles and were convinced of his power but did not believe in him. Thus, simply experiencing divine power does not necessarily lead someone to faith. In fact, someone who says, “Just show me a miracle and then I’ll believe,” is likely telling us that they are not ready to embrace Christ in faith.

*You have revealed yourself to me, Lord, and I believe in you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, September 13 John 10:22-30**

*“The miracles I do in my Father’s name speak for me”*

 The people surrounding Jesus are looking for an unambiguous statement from Jesus about his identity. Are they seeking clarity or are they antagonistic? What they want is an open, clear statement from Jesus about his messiahship, and no doubt they are poised to judge him if his answer is not to their liking. Given the explosive, highly politicized views of the Messiah in this period, it is not surprising that Jesus thus far has not made an explicit, public claim to be the Christ. He has done so privately to the Samaritan woman (John 4:26) and the blind man (John 9:35-37), and many have already declared him to be God’s Messiah.

 The root problem is unbelief. The character of Jesus’ life and his miracles wrought by God’s power (or “name”) indicate his true identity. But the problem is that only those who are Jesus’ sheep, only those who have committed themselves to following Jesus, can understand these things. This does not excuse unbelief; it simply means that eyes of faith are required to see Jesus for who he is.

*You have given me the gift of faith, Lord, and I know that you are Messiah. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

September 11 - 16

“The Miracles and Death of Christ”

**Thursday, September 14 Isaiah 53:10-12**

*“It was the Lord’s will to crush him”*

 These things that happen to God’s Servant are not accidental; they are intended. Moreover it is God’s intention. The opening lines of verse 10 are terrible. What good father could *wish* for his son to be crushed? It is only possible if there was some unquestionably greater good to be obtained. And what greater good could possibly justify the crushing of the Servant? The answer is given in the second half of the verse. It is when the life of the Servant is given as a sin offering that God’s purpose in bringing him to this place is realized. The Servant did not come to tell people what God wants; rather, he came to *be* what God wants *for us*.

 Verse 11 reiterates what is accomplished in the Servant’s death, but this time from the Servant’s point of view: when his life has been offered up for others, he will be satisfied. The hard struggle will have been worth it, for it will accomplish righteousness for those who accept it on their own behalf. How? By bearing their sin. Because of his sacrifice for others, God will give his Servant the victory over sin and death.

*When you took my sin upon yourself, Lord, you made me right with God. Amen.*

**Friday, September 15 Luke 24:36-49**

*“It was written long ago that the Messiah must suffer and die and rise again”*

 Jesus explains what the cross and resurrection mean. He reminds them that he predicted what has taken place. A crucified and raised Messiah is not an adjustment in God’s plan; this road was in the design all along. In fact, everything written about Jesus in the Hebrew Scriptures must be fulfilled. The disciples are experiencing what Scripture promised and what the saints of old longed to see.

 It is important to note that the Christian church has developed its understanding of the Old Testament from Jesus. His instruction regarding basic elements of divine promise is summarized by three verbs: “suffer,” “rise,” and “be preached.” Jesus’ death and resurrection lead to a preaching commission for the disciples. All three of these stages are reflected in the Old Testament. The Christ, the Messiah, was to suffer (e.g., Psalm 22 and 69; Isaiah 52:13-53:12) and to be raised (e.g., Psalm 16:8-10 and 110:1), and the disciples must now engage in preaching to the nations “repentance and forgiveness of sins” (e.g., Isaiah 40:3-5; Amos 9:15).

*As your disciple, Lord, use me to share the message of forgiveness of sins. Amen.*

**Saturday, September 16 Acts 4:23-31**

*“They preached God’s message with boldness”*

 Peter and John had narrowly escaped prolonged imprisonment and physical punishment at the hands of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling council). The believers did not respond with fear, anxiety, or desire for safety. Instead they went to prayer. First, they affirmed the absolute sovereignty of God (v. 24). Nothing happens without his knowledge, and he can use all things for his purposes and glory. Second, they used the historical example of David to remind themselves that what they were enduring had happened to the Lord’s people through the ages (vv. 25-26).

 Third, they focused on what had happened to Jesus (vv. 27-28) to declare that God will intervene in the worst that humanity does and bring about his best. He is able to bring good out of evil, and there is a purpose in everything if we trust him. Finally, they asked God to confirm their witness to Christ Jesus with a continuation of signs and wonders (vv. 29-30), in spite of the fact that it was the miraculous healing of a crippled man that had brought them to the unwelcome attention of the authorities in the first place.

*May we be bold, Lord, to proclaim you regardless of the consequences. Amen.*