*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

January 16 - 21

“Tearful Prayer”

**Monday, January 16 Job 16:12-22**

*“My eyes are red with weeping”*

Job was a wealthy man with many herds of animals and servants to care for them. He also had a large family, having fathered seven sons and three daughters. Not only was he rich in earthly terms, but he was also known as a righteous man who was upright before God. Then one calamity after another struck him. First, his herds were taken by thieves and the servants killed. Then all ten of his children were killed when the house they were in collapsed. Lastly, he was afflicted with painful sores all over his body.

His wife told him to “curse God and die,” and his “friends” said that he must have done something terrible against God, but he rejects their opinions. As we see in these verses, he is unwilling to give up on his relationship with God. Although he doesn’t understand how God could have allowed all these bad things to happen to him, and while he is overwhelmed by his emotions as “I pour out my tears to God,” he prays that God will help him understand all that has happened to him. God is his friend, not his enemy.

*Even in the worst of times, Lord, you are on my side. Amen.*

**Tuesday, January 17 Luke 7:36-50**

*“She knelt at Jesus’ feet weeping”*

The woman in our story illustrates some basic truths about faith and love. In terms of faith, she demonstrates an ability to overcome barriers such as the popular perceptions about her. As a woman, even to contemplate publicly drawing near to Jesus was a risk, because women did not do such things in that culture. The fact that she is a woman whose “sins are many” according to Jesus only heightens the risk, since a religious figure like Jesus might reject her. Yet her gratitude and humility are so great that drawing near to Jesus is all she cares about. Jesus honors her faith and declares her forgiven.

The woman expresses herself with quiet action and honest tears. She speaks no words in this story, yet her actions of devotion to Jesus speak volumes. Her testimony stands on its own merit. She has experienced the love of God for her, a love to which she responds with deep gratitude. Some perhaps misunderstood and even doubted her intentions, but God sees her heart and knows her love for his Son.

*It can be overwhelming, Lord, to realize how much you love me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, January 18 Isaiah 53:1-3**

*“A man of sorrows”*

Isaiah is prophesying about the coming of the Messiah, the one who seven hundred years after Isaiah will be born in Bethlehem and given the name Jesus. Isaiah tells us that this Servant of God will be rejected. Why? Three reasons are given. (1) He comes onto the scene in a quiet and unassuming way. (2) He has no extraordinary beauty or attractiveness to draw people to him. (3) He is rejected because he takes on himself the pain and suffering of the world.

This suffering of the world is not restricted to physical suffering, but neither does it exclude such suffering. The excruciating death he will experience on the cross makes that clear. But what Isaiah is pointing to here is the human tendency to find pain and suffering disturbing, both because we do not know what to say in sympathy and because it reminds us of our own vulnerability. So we try to ignore it (they “hide their faces”) and not to think about it (“we esteemed him not”). The Servant has come to take away the sins of the world, but no one pays any attention to him.

*Whenever I reject you, Lord, it causes you sorrow. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

January 16 - 21

“Tearful Prayer”

**Thursday, January 19 Isaiah 53:4-9**

*“He was wounded and crushed for our sins”*

If there were any question about why the Servant suffers, these verses answer the question once and for all. Despite what we thought, he is not suffering because God has inflicted deserved punishment on him. It is our suffering that he bore, and it is for our sins that he suffered. The Servant has suffered in our place. Although we are the blind and rebellious sheep who have gone astray, he is the one who gets beaten for our disobedience.

Since he is innocent while we are guilty, there is clearly an injustice in the way the Servant is treated. He is now compared to a sheep, and with very different results. In him it is the mild, defenseless nature of the sheep that is the basis of comparison. Although his suffering is manifestly unjust, he accepts it without protest. He is put on trial and found guilty by men who are themselves guilty of the very thing they charge him with, yet he does not declare his innocence. The injustice of what the Servant suffers is further underlined in his being deprived of “descendants,” evidently because he is killed in the prime of life.

*I was the one who sinned, Lord, but you were the one who died in my place. Amen.*

**Friday, January 20 Isaiah 53:10-12**

*“After the suffering . . . he will be satisfied”*

Why have these things happened to the Servant? The answer is given in these verses. They were not accidental; they were intended. Moreover, it was God’s intention. How terrible! What good father would *wish* for his son to be crushed? It is only possible if there was some unquestionably greater good to be obtained. And it is obtained when the life of the Servant is freely given as an offering for sin. Then will the injustice that the Servant has suffered be rectified, and God’s purpose in bringing him to this place will be realized.

Jesus did not come to tell us what God wants; rather, he came to be for us what we could not be for ourselves. He came to save us, and it is only through his death that he is able to do so. Therefore, he is willing to go through the suffering because he knows that when it is all over, he will be satisfied. His hard struggle will have been worth it as you and I, through faith in him, will not perish but receive everlasting life. Having been considered the lowest, he will be known as the greatest; having been the weakest, he is now the strongest.

*After suffering and tears, Lord, there is eternal life and joy. Amen.*

**Saturday, January 21 Hebrews 5:7-10**

*“He offered up prayers . . . with tears”*

In Jewish culture there are said to be three ways of making requests of God, each loftier than the preceding – prayer, crying, and tears. Prayer is made in silence; crying with raised voice; but tears are the strongest “voice” before God. Our thoughts turn to Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane where his prayers were so intense that his sweat was as drops of blood, or to his weeping over the city of Jerusalem, or to his tears at the tomb of Lazarus. While the outcome of Gethsemane may suggest that God did not “hear” that prayer in the sense of exempting Jesus from the cross, God did “hear” it, affirming the righteousness of his Son’s reverent submission through the resurrection.

When the author says that Jesus “learned obedience,” he is not suggesting that the Son had been disobedient. Rather, Jesus’ call involved walking obediently all the way to the end of a path to which the Father had appointed him. That obedient walk included terrible tear-producing suffering, both in his body and in his sorrow for the lost.

*Tearful prayer, Lord, you do not despise for you know it well. Amen.*