*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

March 13 - 18

“The Life of Jesus: Teaching”

**Monday, March 13 Luke 6:1-11**

*“I, the Son of Man, am Lord of the Sabbath”*

 In these verses we read of the confrontation between Jesus with his new views of the Sabbath, and the Pharisees who were passionately devoted to maintaining the tradition of rules that regulated what a person may and may not do on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were guardians of what used to be. They missed the *now* of God – the sense of God in their midst. Jesus was and is, through the Holy Spirit, the *now* of God. What God was doing *now*, in this “Lord of the Sabbath,” was to bring new insight to the meaning of the Sabbath.

 Jesus went to the heart of the matter when he addressed the *why* of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is one special day in the week when in faith we come together as a family of brothers and sisters. God promises to be with us and that there will be power to be healed, changed, convicted, guided and blessed. The Sabbath is for us, and Jesus saw it as a time for God to give good gifts to his people. If the Sabbath is for us, then it’s okay for the hungry to eat grain. If the Sabbath is for us, then it’s fitting that the sick be healed on that day.

*Thank you, Lord, for teaching us God’s purpose for the Sabbath. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 14 Luke 6:17-26**

*“Jesus turned to his disciples and said . . .”*

 This passage begins with a summary of Jesus’ teaching and healing ministry (vv. 17-19). Following that is the actual teaching of Jesus on this occasion (vv.20-49), the major theme of which is a call to exceptional love in light of the offer of God’s gracious blessing. Jesus outlines what he desires from his followers, especially as they relate to those outside the community, including those who oppose them.

 The teaching begins with an invitation and a warning to those listening to Jesus. The invitation is to live in God’s Kingdom where God’s grace is bestowed on those who follow him. We will need that grace, for the Kingdom is not presently an easy place in which to live. In this world we will experience difficulty and hardship from those who are against God, illustrated by poverty, hunger, weeping, and being hated. In contrast, the warning shows God’s displeasure with those who oppose his Kingdom and who persecute his disciples as a result. Their wealth, satisfaction, laughter and popularity are short-lived.

*Give me grace, Lord, to live my life for you in spite of opposition. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 15 Luke 6:27-36**

*“Love your enemies”*

 Jesus here addresses the ethical character of his disciple, and fundamental to ethics is love – not a self-serving love but a unique love that endures. The love Jesus commands is not an abstract love tucked away in the person’s inner recesses, but a love that demonstrates itself in concrete action. The disciple should do good to those who hate them, bless those who curse them, and pray for those who abuse them. Jesus expects action, not just a private prayer to God. Jesus teaches us to love our enemies.

 When our enemy slaps us, makes demands on us, and takes things from us, the disciple of Jesus understands that God is watching over him or her. Any retribution for those wrong behaviors should be left in God’s hands, and greatest vindication of all is to transform the enemy into a friend of God through the example of love. Jesus closes this particular teaching by pointing out that the standard of the disciple’s behavior is the merciful nature of God. To be his child is to reflect his gracious, merciful, and forgiving character to the world.

*Help me to love the unlovable, Lord, in the same way that you have loved me. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

March 13 - 18

“The Life of Jesus: Teaching”

**Thursday, March 16 Luke 6:37-42**

 *“Do not judge”*

 If, in imitation of God, we are to love others, including our enemies (as Jesus taught in the previous verses), then we should also be slow to judge. Love for a person means that we do not fix a view of him or her in stone. Moreover, the measure we use toward others is the measure God will use toward us. If we do not judge; he will not judge us. If we do not condemn; he will not condemn us. If we give; he will give to us in “good measure.” In fact, he will give with overflowing abundance. God honors a compassionate spirit.

 Jesus continues to attack a critical spirit, like that of the Pharisees, by mentioning the quickness with which we are hypocritically aware of a little fault in someone else but ignore the log in our own eye. According to Jesus, it takes nerve to talk to a fellow human being about his or her little faults while pretending we have none of our own. Jesus does not absolve us of relational accountability, however. The way to address it is by paying attention to our own faults first and dealing fully with them before turning our attention to the treatment of the little faults of others.

*May I be quick to love, Lord, and slow to judge. Amen.*

**Friday, March 17 Luke 6:43-45**

*“The tree is recognized by its fruit”*

 How can one know the character of a person? Jesus says to check the fruit. A good tree bears good fruit, not bad, and vice versa; every tree is known by its fruit. A bad tree cannot yield good fruit, nor a good tree bad fruit. The agricultural illustrations, drawn from Palestinian everyday life, depict people. Good people produce good deeds from a good heart, while evil people sprout evil deeds from a destructive heart. Jesus highlights speech here. “Out of the abundance of [one’s] heart [one’s] mouth speaks.” The tongue is a litmus test of the soul. Each one should examine one’s own self in this regard, reflecting on one’s words.

 The need to be fruitful for Christ is important in relation to those who do not know him. All too often the unbeliever refuses to listen to the claims of Jesus because they know Christians who are hypocrites. When such a charge is raised, there is some value in pointing out that Christians are not perfect, just forgiven sinners – but that will only go so far. Jesus needs people who know God and walk with him in such a way that their good fruit is evident for all to see.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, that my fruit may be good. Amen.*

**Saturday, March 18 Luke 6:46-49**

*“Hear my words and put them into practice”*

 Any disciple who respects Jesus should do what he says. How can one call him “Lord” and not do what he says? That is hypocrisy. This is one of several times that Jesus’ teaching highlights hearing and doing. He uses a parable to drive the point home. To hear Jesus and do what he says is like building a home with a solid foundation. Such a home can stand up against the floods of life. Even when the surging waters beat against the house, it stands, because it is well built. In contrast, the person who hears but does not do what Jesus teaches becomes a tragic figure. That home is built without a foundation. When the problems of life rise and tensions flood, they sweep the house away.

 Just as it is foolish to build a house without a foundation, it is foolish not to do what Jesus teaches. We should hear his invitation to enter God’s grace and experience the assurance God offers. We should follow his call to love in a way that differs from the world, to be merciful and gracious to others, and to work on our own faults rather than those of others.

*Your teaching, Lord, is always worthy to be obeyed. Amen.*