*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

February 18 – 23

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Monday, February 18 John 8:1-11**

*“Neither do I condemn you”*

This witness to Jesus’ caring love for one lonely, frightened sinner makes visible the meaning of judgment. All through his time in Jerusalem Jesus is being judged by his antagonists. They say that he has never studied (7:15), or he has a demon (7:20), or he comes from the wrong place to be the Messiah (7:27). They claim his witness is not true (8:13), that he is a Samaritan (8:48), and repeatedly seek to arrest him (7:30). But paradoxically Jesus becomes their judge, not because he came to judge them, but because of who he is. As light reveals what goes on in the darkness, Jesus unmasks his enemies’ angry motives.

Which of these men, or who of us, can stand up to the test of being without sin and be able to pick up a stone? None! Jesus has no need to speak a further word. The truth has judged them. After they leave, the woman is left to face this merciful judge who is not her enemy. But he neither minimizes nor covers up her sin. She is to rid herself of it. Otherwise it will destroy her. In the end, guilt is not the last word, but hope.

*I, too, Jesus, hear you say to me: “Go, and sin no more.” Amen.*

**Tuesday, February 19 Romans 8:1-4**

*“No condemnation”*

When Paul uses the word “condemnation” in verse 1, he has in mind the law court in which a person who is found guilty of a crime awaits his sentence, that is, his condemnation. But, because you and I, having been declared guilty of sin but forgiven by Christ through faith, are no longer guilty, there is no condemnation awaiting us for our sin. We escape the sentence of spiritual death that our sins have justly earned. Living a new life in God, we no longer fear that our sins will ever bring condemnation upon us.

Verse 2 grounds verse 1 (“because”) in the power of the Holy Spirit which is greater than the power of sin. Yes, as Christians we still sin, but sin no longer has the power of condemnation in us because the Spirit is in us. Paul elaborates on this truth in verses 3 and 4, grounding the work of the Spirit in the person of Christ. Jesus came as a human being and, though he himself was without sin and was not subject to condemnation, he took sin upon himself and suffered its consequence so that we would not.

*Your Spirit, Jesus, empowers me to stand strong against sin. Amen.*

**Wednesday, February 20 Luke 7:36-50**

*“She has shown me much love”*

The essence of the gospel is *agape*, which is the Greek word for the love of God, a love unlike any other love. Every other kind of love is to some degree conditioned. It’s a trade-off: “I will if you will.” God’s love is very different. Through Jesus, God is saying that he loves you and me just the way we are now. There’s nothing we can do that can make him love us more than he does right now. But, if we will respond to his love and give him our life, he is not going to leave us as we are. We are a mess, obviously. He will transform us from what we are, set us free from the sins that control our thoughts and words and actions and, by his Spirit who lives in us, he will cause us to become what he has always intended us to be.

Simon knew everything about religion, theology, temple worship, and the law. He knew all about the things of God but somehow he missed the essence of it all, which this woman captured. The woman knew how sinful she was and, because she had been forgiven her great sin, her love for Jesus was great.

*I love you, Jesus, for you have forgiven all my sin. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

February 18 - 23

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Thursday, February 21 John 8:12-20**

*“I am the light of the world”*

Jesus boldly faces the Pharisees and claims that he is the light of the world. He does so against the background of the four great candelabra in the temple court that had been lighted on the first day of the festival celebration, a reminder that the children of Israel had been guided at night by a pillar of fire in their wilderness pilgrimage. But now a greater living Light has come, not simply to guide a particular people who sit in darkness, but for the whole world. He will be a light to the Gentiles as well as to his own people, the Jews.

Jesus’ bold witness about himself – who he is and why he has come – is crucial. And this is where the Pharisees attack him. They say his “witness” is a lie, and his claim to be light is a grandiose illusion. In response, Jesus points out that according to their own law, “the testimony of two men is true.” Each authenticates the word of the other. This is precisely the relationship of Father and Son. The Son seeks only to be a faithful witness to the Father, who has sent him. And the Father bears witness to the Son by approving and blessing his mission.

*You have given me a mission, Jesus, to be your faithful witness. Amen.*

**Friday, February 22 Isaiah 9:1-5**

*“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light”*

If the God who is present in the world were a demon or a monster, his presence would be one of endless terror. Even if he were only relentlessly just, his presence would not be a blessing to us unless we were somehow able to live without mistake, error, or sin at all times. But the good news is that the God who is with us is a God who wants to turn our darkness into light, our conflict into peace, our loss into abundance, our despair into joy. Since a God like that is with us, that is good news to all eternity.

But how can he be with us? If he is transcendent, if he is morally perfect, if he is infinite, if he is eternal, how can he be with us who are created, sinful, finite, and mortal? How can he accomplish all that he desires in our lives when our lives are so far from his? It is in sending his Son to earth as a human being that God bridges the gap. This Son, Jesus the Messiah, will come and he will be the great light shining in a dark world. The divine becomes one of the created, and in him we behold glory, the unfailing love and grace of God.

*You shined your light into my darkness, Jesus, and I now belong to you. Amen.*

**Saturday, February 23 Matthew 5:13-16**

*“You are the light of the world”*

Light is a symbol of radiance, of openness, of joy compatible with the blessing of being a child of God. There is nothing secretive about the Christian commitment or way of life. The disciple is described as a light to the world, an influence for openness and honesty, for acceptance and love. Therefore, the Christian does not retreat from life but shares his or her joy with others as a witness to the world.

While a light is to be seen, serving as a guide for travelers, it is basically to be of service. Jesus’ disciples are lights in the world, not calling attention to themselves but pointing the way of God. They obtain their light from the One who is the Light of the world. This visibility and service is expressed by Jesus in two illustrations: the city on the mountain and the candle placed on the lampstand. The light dispels darkness simply by being present. The motive is to illuminate the way of God for others, that by seeing our good works they may glorify God. For this light to be seen we live openly in the midst of the world as disciples of Christ.

*May how I live, Jesus, show others who you are. Amen.*