*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

March 4 - 9

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Monday, March 4 John 9:1-7**

*“A man blind from birth”*

 Here is one solitary human being who has never seen the face of his parents or his friends nor known the beauty of a sunrise or a lily. “Blind from birth” says John, as each of us is born spiritually blind. And Jesus sees him, and he stops! For him, no one is ever lost in the crowd. He knows each of us, where we are, and what our need is. This is our hope. The disciples, however, children of orthodox Jewish thought which assumed that any physical illness or calamity was caused by someone’s wrongdoing, raise the question of who caused the man’s blindness.

 Do we not all seek for the hidden cause that brings on tragedy – cancer, a car accident, or the stillborn child? Who is responsible? We feel we must identify the culprit. So, we discuss the matter endlessly, sometimes earnestly, but often foolishly. Jesus, however, does not focus on the past, nor is he interested in answering theological questions, for he sets the needs of this man in the context of what God can do. He knows that the work of God will be done in this situation even though people call it impossible.

*I once was blind, Jesus, but you healed me and now I see. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 5 John 9:8-16**

*“How were your eyes opened?”*

 Those who have watched this man come and go, struggling in his blindness, are confused. Can this seeing man be the one who used to sit and beg? The contrast is so great. But the healed man makes his identity clear. He alone knows who he is and what has happened to him. When they ask how it happened, he tells them what he knows. It was a gift. He heard Jesus’ command, obeyed, and now he sees. There is an uncluttered honesty and directness about this man’s testimony that serves as an example for all who have been healed by Christ.

 Immediately some of the investigating Pharisees dismiss this healer as a law-breaker. How can he possible be from God when he heals on the Sabbath? But others see the event with different eyes. How can a sinner open any man’s eyes? Here is the watershed that divides those who are locked into legalistic prejudices, stubbornly protecting “sacred cows” regardless of the facts, from those who are struggling to be open to what God might do in some unexpected way or place. This miracle of grace is carrying them beyond the rigidities of the law.

*May my testimony of you, Jesus, be simple and sincere. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 6 Matthew 12:1-8**

*“The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath”*

 One cause of the clashes between Jesus and the Pharisees was their legalism, the keeping of laws as ends in themselves. Value was sought more in the legalistic act than in the sense of faithfulness to God. Jesus reminded them of the meaning of the prophetic word which they failed to practice: “For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6). In answer to the Pharisees’ charge that the disciples had violated the Sabbath rules, Jesus lifted two illustrations from Scripture.

 Fleeing from Saul, and being hungry, David entered the tabernacle and ate the bread which was only to be eaten by the priests. Following this reference to David, the highest person in their national history, he turned to the temple, the highest level of holiness in their religious life, and pointed to the temple priests who broke the “no work on the Sabbath” rule, yet were within the law. Jesus then declared himself greater than the temple and Lord of the Sabbath. As such, he is the ultimate authority regarding service and worship of God.

*While ritual and law are important, Jesus, mercy and love are superior. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

March 4 - 9

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Thursday, March 7 John 9:17-23**

*“They called in his parents”*

 The Pharisees take another tack and call in the parents of the man who had been healed of his blindness. Perhaps here they can discover evidence that will discredit the story of their stubborn son. But these parents can only answer what they know. Yes, this is their son, and he was blind and now he sees. But they do not know how this happened. Their son is of age. He can speak for himself.

 How unlike their honest, independent son these parents are. There is a tentativeness, a hesitating kind of fear, in all they say. After all, they are facing hostile interrogators who have already decided that if anyone comes near admitting that this healing may have been done by the Messiah, he will be “put out of the synagogue,” which would be a humiliating ostracism. Seemingly more concerned about their standing in the community and what their friends and neighbors might think, than rejoicing over their son who has experienced a miracle, they take the easy way out.

*I will not allow the world’s hostility, Jesus, to keep me from affirming you. Amen.*

**Friday, March 8 John 9:24-34**

*“They threw him out”*

 Now there is a final confrontation. The Pharisees are into this case too deeply to leave it hanging. So the healed man is called in again and confronted with the Pharisees’ judgment concerning Jesus: “We know this man is a sinner.” But the man will not be intimidated. He speaks the truth as he had experienced it. And since this kind healer has thus far not revealed his identity to the man, he does not know whether or not the healer is a sinner. But one thing he does know, and this he clings to tenaciously, “I was blind, now I see.” No council of Pharisees, however powerful, can change that.

 This man who now sees, not only physically, but with an inner spiritual illumination, is amazed that these learned “disciples of Moses” do not know from whence this healer has come, for he must be from God, who surely would not listen to the healer’s prayers if he were a sinner. His simple spiritual reasoning is too much for the Pharisees. So they throw him out of the Synagogue. But in being thrown out, he is “cast” into new life.

*This world is not my home, Jesus; my home is with you. Amen.*

**Saturday, March 9 John 9:35-41**

*“Yes, Lord, I believe”*

 Jesus does not leave this man to his lonely fate. When he hears he has been cast out, he comes to him. Now the work of healing will be completed. The man finally discovers who it is that has healed him. The one he first called “Jesus,” then a “Prophet,” and then “One from God,” now reveals himself as the “Son of God.” Now an eternal light floods his inmost being, and he can only cry out, “I believe.”

 The stubborn, courageous witness of this man was a word of renewing strength for those tiny communities of Jewish Christian believers scattered throughout the Roman Empire who read John’s Gospel. Like this man, they had heard the voice of Jesus and obeyed, and their eyes had been opened. But in turning to him they had been ridiculed and cast out from their people. In the face of continuing hostility they must have become weary and fearful and even wavered. This healed man, so bold in his witness, became a model for the early church. Jesus had sought him when he was cast out. So these early believers were heartened, knowing Jesus would not leave them.

*I believe in you, Jesus, and I worship you. Amen.*