*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 15 - 20

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Monday, April 15 John 18:1-18**

*“Jesus is arrested”*

Jesus moves into the events of his betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion and death with a calm courage, even anticipation. This is why he has come. Jesus is the central actor, the prime mover, throughout these events, not Judas or Annas or Caiaphas or Pilate, although their judgments and actions may seem to determine what takes place. It is Jesus who “went out” with his disciples, and “went forward” to meet his enemies when they came, and asked that they let his disciples “go their way” and not arrest them.

Peter follows the arrested Jesus, as does “another disciple.” The intimate details which tell us how Peter got into the courtyard from the outside indicate that John was that other disciple, but he does not mention his name. The servant girl at the door asks Peter, who a few minutes before was swinging his sword in defense of Jesus, if he is not one of Jesus’ disciples. Peter’s response of denial, “I am not,” is a contrast to Jesus’ identification of himself as “I am he” when they come to arrest him.

*For my sake, Jesus, you allowed yourself to be taken by evil men. Amen.*

**Tuesday, April 16 John 18:19-40**

*“Jesus is put on trial”*

Annas, who is here referred to as a “high priest” because he held the office in the past, asks Jesus about his disciples and his teachings. He must be wondering if Jesus has been fomenting revolution. In response, Jesus declares that none of his teachings have been secret or hidden. We sense Jesus’ strong authority coming through in his answer. Those who heard him could testify that he shared the truth openly. Annas sends Jesus to Caiaphas, who in turn sends him to Pilate. Meanwhile, we are told that Peter is given two more chances to confess that he is one of Jesus’ disciples, but each time he denies it.

Jesus, the lowly Galilean, is brought face to face with Pilate, the powerful Roman Governor. As the certainty of Jesus’ innocence becomes increasingly clear to Pilate, the struggle in his soul intensifies. One can feel the vacillation and uncertainty in Pilate as he moves back and forth, in and out, from the quiet probing conversation with Jesus to the angry political pressure of the Jews who are demanding the death of the man he is questioning.

*Not even death, Jesus, can conquer your truth. Amen.*

**Wednesday, April 17 John 19:1-16**

*“Jesus is sentenced”*

Pilate subjects Jesus to the physical cruelty and sarcastic taunts of his soldiers, thinking this may satisfy the accusers. While the scourging and the twisted crown of thorns, the purple robe and the shouts of derision are all a mockery of Jesus’ kingship, yet at a deeper level, the kingdom level, he is being proclaimed King. It is part of John’s inspired genius that he makes it clear here that this humiliation in Pilate’s court is Jesus’ hour of glory. He is a King suffering for the salvation of his people.

As Pilate genuinely tries to save Jesus from execution one way or another, the pressure of the scribes and chief priests for Jesus’ blood keeps building until finally he succumbs to their threats and delivers Jesus to them to be crucified. Pilate does not have the inner resources to withstand his own anxious desire to stay in the good graces of Caesar. And the Jews, who had not accepted Jesus as Savior when he came teaching and healing, now accept him as the one to be killed.

*You, Jesus, are my King, and no human ridicule can change that. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 15 - 20

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Thursday, April 18 John 19:17-27**

*“Jesus is crucified”*

Every criminal was identified by a placard over his head on the cross listing the crimes for which he was being executed. How ironic that the governor, a pagan, should proclaim the kingship of Jesus to the many Jews who passed. Jesus was a King so universal that it was announced in the three major languages of that day. This is surely a sign that this “grain of wheat” which was falling into the ground would “bear much fruit.” And what Pilate had written he refused to change in spite of the protests of the chief priests. In a strange way, Pilate has had the last say.

As there were four unbelieving soldiers at the cross, so there were four believing women standing by with fear and sorrow. These friends did not leave in Jesus’ hour of desolation. Surely strength and comfort were shared with Jesus in this act of faithful companionship. Jesus now reaches out in his hour of death and cares for his mother as she cared for him in his boyhood years. It is to John the disciple that he gives the responsibility for her wellbeing.

*You have given us one another, Jesus, that we may care for each other. Amen.*

**Friday, April 19 John 19:28-42**

*“Jesus dies and is buried”*

Here is the heart of the Gospel. Jesus has completed all the work his Father has given him. He has left nothing undone. And every detail of his ministry has been the fulfillment of Scripture, even his cry of thirst. Jesus’ last words, “It is finished!” is a cry of victory. He is really in charge, and he willingly accepts death because it is the completion of God’s plan. It was the Roman custom to leave the bodies of the crucified victims on the cross as a warning to others. But according to Jewish law, a dead body was not to remain “overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land” (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

Two disciples who have been “secret believers,” “closet disciples,” come forward and publicly ask Pilate for the body of Jesus. Inspired by Jesus’ sacrifice, they openly confess they are his followers. Having been among those rulers who “believed in him, but because of the Pharisees . . . did not confess him” (John 12:42), now, after a long time of silence and fear, they come forward to announce their allegiance.

*As did Joseph and Nicodemus, Jesus, may I take a stand for you. Amen.*

**Saturday, April 20 John 20:1-18**

*“Jesus is risen”*

The resurrection of Jesus is not a spectacular event with crashing cymbals and blaring trumpets. No, the discovery that he is alive is like the quiet dawning of a new day heralding the defeat of the night. The risen Christ meets his friends personally and intimately at unexpected times and places, overcoming their grief and doubt. They are filled with joy and peace as they move from sight to faith. It is Mary Magdalene who first comes to the tomb. She had sinned much and Jesus had done for her what no one else could do. He had forgiven and cleansed her.

When Mary sees the open tomb she assumes the body is gone. She runs to share this disturbing news with Peter and John, who take off running for the tomb to find out what might have happened. The empty tomb and the folded grave clothes are quiet evidence that Jesus is alive. And they believe. After the two disciples leave, Mary remains at the tomb. Having seen two angels in the tomb, she turns to see a man she mistakes for the gardener. Then the risen Christ speaks her name, and she knows his voice.

*I know you are alive, Jesus, for I have heard you call my name. Amen.*