*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 13 - 18

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Monday, May 13 John 15:1-4**

*“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener”*

 As Jesus and his disciples leave the upper room and move toward the Garden of Gethsemane they pass the temple. Here one of the chief ornaments is a “golden vine with a cluster of grapes as large as a man.” This decoration becomes the basis of a visual parable. Jesus’ intimate relationship with these men cannot be stated in precise, theological terms. So, he uses the motif of a vine and its branches to illustrate spiritual truth. His union with these men is like the relationship of the vine to its branches.

 Jesus is the “true vine.” In the Old Testament, Israel had frequently been spoken of as the vine which God loved and tended. But waywardness and corruption had made God’s people barren. Now it is Jesus who is the real vine, the Chosen One from God. His Father owns the vineyard and cares for it. And his one primary purpose in growing a vineyard is that it will bear fruit. So, the branches that bear no fruit he takes away, and he prunes the fruit-bearing branches by removing the sprouts and leaves which reduce the branches’ fruitfulness.

*I will remain in you, Jesus, so I can bear fruit for the Father. Amen.*

**Tuesday, May 14 John 15:5-8**

*“Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit”*

 There is only one evidence that a branch is truly alive: it produces clusters of grapes Note carefully, however, what the metaphor is not saying. Fruit-bearing is not a test; that is, a branch does not have to demonstrate a level of productivity to be safe from destruction. Rather, fruit-bearing is a byproduct. “Apart from me you can do nothing.” To be connected to the vine means that the life of Jesus is flowing through us, and this leads to fruitfulness. For an example of the fruit of a life connected to Jesus, brought about by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, see Galatians 5:22-23.

 Jesus then draws out some of the implications that come from remaining in him. To remain in Jesus his word must remain in us, and the word of Jesus includes the command to be obedient. It is in keeping Jesus’ word that we demonstrate our love for him. Further, Jesus proclaims that those whose lives are in harmony with him through his word will find their prayers controlled by his word, and such prayers will be answered and bring added glory to God.

*I spend time in your word, Jesus, that I may remain in you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 15 John 15:9-17**

*“Remain in my love”*

 The union between Jesus and his disciples is not an external arrangement, but an internal, personal relationship. Jesus defines this union, gives it content and substance, by a “triad of love.” The Son loves these disciples as the Father loves him. This is the love that has sought them out, called them into life, and which now holds them and sends them out into the world to continue his mission. What an awesome, yet tender reality. But these frail, struggling men are then to love one another as Jesus loves them. This is not an option, but a command. It is an impossibility unless they abide in his love.

 This love is not a vague, sentimental feeling that comes and goes, but a tough reality that is always revealed in obedience. The Son shares in and shows forth his Father’s love by absolute obedience to all his commands, which takes him now to the cross. The disciples can only abide in the love of Jesus, then, if they keep his commandments. Love and obedience are two sides of the same reality.

*Abiding in your love, Jesus, enables me to obey your commands. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 13 - 18

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Thursday, May 16 John 15:18-25**

*“If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first”*

 The disciples will be hated by the world as Jesus has been hated. It is the nature of the world to hate as it is the nature of the disciple to love. And these are mutually exclusive. So as the disciples are known for their love, the world is known for its hatred. These men are not of the world, for Jesus has chosen them out of the world, not to leave the world, but to continue his mission in the world as a new community of love. And the separation of the disciples from the world makes them objects of its hatred.

 The world loves only its own, those who conform to its spirit, accept its values, and worship its false gods. The disciples will be treated the same as their Master. They will be persecuted as he has been persecuted. This hatred of the world is sin grounded in their ignorance of God. They do not know the Father even though the whole of Jesus’ life and ministry, all his work, has been a revelation of his Father. Therefore, their hatred is directed at God the Father, not only at his Son. Here again we see the union of Father and Son in another context.

*You have warned us, Jesus, of the world’s hatred of our life in you. Amen.*

**Friday, May 17 John 15:26 – 16:4**

*“I will send you the Paraclete – the Spirit of truth”*

 In the face of persecution, the disciples will be in the world as witnesses to Jesus. Their intimate companionship with him from the beginning of his ministry is the ground for their witness. However, their authority does not rest simply on memories of what he has done. For the hatred of the world will be countered by the strong witness of the Paraclete who is coming to dwell with the disciples. He is the Spirit of truth and can only declare the truth that is in Jesus. The Spirit is grieved and offended when anyone claims that in their experience the Spirit has led them into new truth beyond Jesus.

 So, the Paraclete will enlighten the meaning of the teachings and works of Jesus which the disciples have heard and seen as his companions. Every disciple is called to be faithful and sensitive in making his witness to Jesus. The word he speaks for Jesus will always have the unique stamp of his personality on it. But it is the Spirit who guides and empowers him so that the witness to Jesus is true.

*Your Spirit strengthens me, Jesus, to be your witness in the midst of opposition. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 18 Matthew 10:16-20**

*“I am sending you out as sheep among wolves”*

 Jesus was a realist and, in sending out his apostles, he told them what to expect. Just as Jesus at times dropped in words of his coming death, so here he speaks to them of their future mission to the larger world and the persecution that will follow. Jesus warns that wariness, yet innocence, will be necessary in the future mission. They must venture out as defenseless sheep in the midst of ravenous wolves, but what will keep them alert to dangers is to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

 The serpent was the emblem of wisdom, shrewdness, and intellectual keenness, while the dove represented simple innocence. This is a difficult but necessary balance to maintain. Without innocence the keenness of the snake is crafty, a devious menace; without keenness the innocence of the dove is naïve, helpless, gullibility. As one scholar has noted: “The caution of the disciples is to consist not in clever diplomatic moves but in the purity of a life that is genuine and wears no masks.”

*Guide me, Jesus, to be wisely innocent in the world. Amen.*