*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

February 22 - 27

Mark’s Gospel

**Monday, February 22 Mark 9:2-8**

*“The Transfiguration”*

 Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to a high mountain, the traditional place for special revelation in Scripture. Mark introduces most events in his Gospel with “immediately” or “and,” but the Transfiguration account begins with the note, “after six days.” This specific logging of the time expressly connects the Transfiguration to the previous incident where Peter confessed Jesus to be the Christ, and Jesus divulged his future suffering, warned of the coming judgment, and promised that some present would see the kingdom coming in power before they died.

 The Transfiguration connects Jesus’ announcement of suffering with the foretaste of his promised resurrection glory. The unearthly white glow emanating from Jesus’ clothes alludes to resurrection since white garments characterize the righteous in the resurrection. For a brief moment, the three disciples glimpse the truth that Jesus’ coming suffering on the cross is not incompatible with his coming resurrection glory. The event also confirms Jesus’ promise that those who follow and suffer for him will not have done so in vain.

*As you died and rose in glory, Lord, so will we who follow you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, February 23 Mark 9:9-13**

*“The question about Elijah”*

 Jesus commands the disciples to keep mum about what they saw and heard until the Son of Man has risen from the dead. God has given them another piece of the puzzle, and the picture is rapidly taking shape, but the secret is not for public proclamation until all the pieces fall into place. For once, someone obeys Jesus’ order to silence. Mark reports that the disciples keep what happened on the mountain to themselves, but they are confused about Jesus’ reference to his resurrection from the dead.

 The disciples had learned from the teachers of religious law that once Elijah returned from the dead, the path would be clear for the Messiah to come and establish God’s Kingdom. Jesus insists that Elijah had indeed come (equating the ministry of John the Baptist with Elijah), and what Elijah/John the Baptist came preaching was repentance for sin. Only when sin was dealt with could God establish the Kingdom, and sin could only be dealt with through the death of Christ on the cross. Death, followed by resurrection, is a necessary part of God’s plan.

*Through your death, Lord, my sin is forgiven and I have a place in God’s Kingdom. Amen.*

**Wednesday, February 24 Mark 9:14-29**

*“Jesus heals a demon-possessed boy”*

 As Jesus comes down from the mountain of Transfiguration, he is confronted with a heated argument between the nine disciples whom he left on the plain and some scribes who were probably ridiculing the disciples for their lack of ability to cast out an evil spirit from a boy. After voicing his frustration with his disciples’ lack of faith, he turns to the boy’s father. Whatever faith he had in Jesus when he brought his son to the disciples, their failure has undermined that faith. Still, he cries out, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief,” and Jesus heals the boy.

 A private evaluation session follows the public crisis created by the disciples’ failure. Rather than hiding their failure, they admit it and ask for help. Jesus has to be encouraged by their request. They know that he has not given up on them and he knows that they want to change. Jesus responds by pointing out that prayer is required, that is, constant contact with the source of spiritual power is necessary for them to be used by God for his purposes. It is not enough simply to be a follower of Jesus – we must be constantly sustained through regular prayer.

*A prayerful relationship with you, Lord, enables me to do your will. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

February 22 - 27

Mark’s Gospel

**Thursday, February 25 Mark 9:30-37**

*“Greatness”*

 Jesus’ public ministry is coming to an end. He needs privacy to continue teaching his disciples about the suffering and death that God requires of him and about what he requires of them. When he makes his second prediction of his death and resurrection, the disciples keep silent. They do not understand what he is talking about, but they are afraid to ask him what it means. So, instead of following up with Jesus on his statement, they begin to argue with one another about who ranks the highest.

 When they arrive in Capernaum, Jesus exposes their squabbling by asking them what they were discussing on the way. Their dispute opens the door for Jesus’ teaching on selfless service. The one who wants to be first must become last of all and servant of all. To reinforce the lesson, Jesus places a little child in their midst, representing someone with no power, no status, few rights, and dependent on his or her father. The greatest thing they can do is serve those who are regarded as insignificant. When they do so, they honor Jesus and the One who sent him.

*For your sake, Lord, I will serve others in your name. Amen.*

**Friday, February 26 Mark 9:38-41**

*“Someone is using your name to cast our demons”*

 John tells Jesus that they saw someone casting out demons in his name and they obstructed him, “Because he was not one of us.” This is quite ironic since the disciples only recently bungled an exorcism, yet they do not hesitate to obstruct someone who is successful but who is not a member of their team. Jesus catches them by surprise when he does not commend them for their vigilance but instead tells them not to stop him.

 Jesus’ reason for condoning the exorcist’s success is practical, for anyone who recognizes the power of Jesus’ name will not accuse him of working by the Devil, as the teachers of the law had done. Jesus has opened the doors wide to include on his side all those who are not against him. Jesus then shifts to the humblest act of compassion. The cup of cold water image suggests that those who bear Christ’s name will find themselves in grievous circumstances and desperate for just a drink of water. Cups of water will be hard to come by, and then they will appreciate more the neutrality of those who do not join the persecution but extend only the most basic kindness.

*Thank you for all, Lord, who minister in your name. Amen.*

**Saturday, February 27 Mark 9:42-50**

 *“If your hand/eye/foot causes you to stumble . . .”*

 Jesus promises a reward to outsiders who show Christians a bare minimum of goodwill (verse 41), but he threatens Christians with dire judgment if they cause a little one who believes in him to slip. He uses hyperbole to make the point. They would be better off to drown at the bottom of the sea with a millstone hung around their necks. God shows more concern for the little one’s fragile faith than for the great one’s overinflated pride, which causes them to lord it over or ignore others and thereby cause them to stumble.

 A string of maxims warns disciples that they need to be more worried about the evil within them than about outsiders. Again, Jesus uses hyperbole. If your hand/eye/foot causes you to stumble, remove them. Judaism prohibited self-mutilation, and Jesus did not intend for followers to take this advice literally. In our spiritual lives, it is better now to take every precaution and to cut off everything in our lives that leads us to sin than to face future punishment for our unwillingness to take disobedience of God’s law seriously.

*Help me to remove from my life, Lord, those things that cause me to sin. Amen.*