*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 3 - 8

Thomas

**Monday, May 3 Matthew 10:1-10**

*“The twelve apostles: . . . Thomas . . .”*

 In answer to the prayer for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field (Matthew 9:38), Jesus calls his twelve disciples to him. While Mark and Luke name the twelve in the context of their initial *calling* (Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16), Matthew names them in the context of their being sent out by Jesus to do *ministry*. Thus, these disciples are also “apostles,” designating them as being commissioned by Jesus to be his representatives who will eventually become leaders of the church established at Pentecost in Acts chapter two.

 Simon Peter is named first and is often referred to as a leader in the twelve. Next is his brother Andrew, then another set of brothers, James and John. Philip, the scholar, and Bartholomew come next, followed by Thomas, the man who wanted to be certain before acting, and Matthew, who authored the gospel. A second James, identified as the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus are numbers nine and ten, with a second Simon, known as the “Zealot,” and Judas, who betrayed Jesus, rounding out the twelve.

*I pray for the leaders of our churches, Lord, that you will bless them. Amen.*

**Tuesday, May 4 John 11:1-16**

*“Let’s go too – and die with Jesus”*

 When Jesus tells his disciples that he is ready to return to Judea, his disciples object. They recall the attempt of the Jews to stone him during his last visit to Judea and ask if he really is planning to go there again. But there is an appointed time, represented by the phrase “the twelve hours of daylight,” when work is to be done. So Jesus will go to Judea and finish the mission the Father has given him. It is a mission that will include suffering and death, but it will also include calling Lazarus back to life. The time has come. “Let us go.”

 It is then that Thomas, called Didymus, which is Greek for “twin,” speaks up. He is a realist who wants to be certain of all the facts before he makes a move, and he says in effect to the rest of them, “We may as well go along and die with him. It looks as if Jesus is going to Judea regardless of what we say. We know there will be trouble. But we’ve come this far, and we may as well go all the way.” Going to Judea is dangerous for Jesus, and it will be dangerous for his disciples, as well.

*I will follow you, Lord, wherever it leads. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 5 John 14:1-7**

*“Lord, we don’t know where you are going”*

 Jesus’ disciples were troubled. They needed to be reassured by this Jesus whom they loved, but often could not understand. He had spoken of one among them being his betrayer and that he would be leaving them, going where they could not come. The only remedy for this dread of death and separation is faith in God, who is steadfast and cannot be shaken. If they have this faith in God they will also have faith in Jesus. And in being united with Jesus in faith, they will find comfort in times of trouble.

 This is far more than a “pep talk” by Jesus. He is on his way to being reunited with his Father in glory. Through his death, resurrection, and ascension, his “leaving” them, he will open the way for his followers to live in union with him and his Father. This will become their eternal place of dwelling. When Thomas still insists that they do not know where Jesus is going and asks how they can know the way, Jesus declares his great conclusive *“I am the way.”* There is no other door to life with the Father.

*You are my way, Lord, and I am forever with you, the Spirit, and the Father. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 3 - 8

Thomas

**Thursday, May 6 John 20:19-29**

 *“Unless I see . . . I will not believe”*

 Thomas had missed the first Easter Sunday encounter with Jesus. Ever the practical realist, he had been so certain they were coming to Judea to “die with him” (John 11:16) that the crucifixion of Jesus only solidified in his mind that they were next. So perhaps Thomas had hidden in fear, gone off to brood over the failure of Jesus’ whole mission, or he may have turned back to his old ways. Whatever it was that cut Thomas off from the other disciples, it gave him occasion to voice his deepest doubts.

 So when the other disciples seek Thomas out and declare that they have seen the risen Lord, he demands proof. Unless he can see and feel Jesus’ scarred hands and wounded side, how can he be certain these others have seen anything more than a mystical apparition? Still, the other disciples somehow get Thomas to come to their next gathering eight days later where Jesus again appears as he had the first time. He addresses Thomas, not with arguments but by offering himself, and Thomas believes and worships.

*You have given me faith, Lord, and it is by faith that I see you. Amen.*

**Friday, May 7 John 21:1-14**

*“Jesus showed himself again to his disciples”*

 Seven of the disciples, including Thomas, have gone back to the well-known shores of the Sea of Galilee to fish. These men need time to work things out. The events of the last days have been overwhelming. Their whole world has been shaken, and they are baffled and confused. What’s next? So when Peter says, “I am going fishing,” the other six join him. Here is something they know and understand and feel comfortable doing.

 But after fishing all night – which is the best time for a good catch – they are empty-handed. It must have been a long, dismal night. One can almost imagine snatches of conversation breaking into long periods of silence. “Where do you suppose Jesus is now?” “What do you think he wants us to do?” “Will we ever see him again?” Then they see a figure on the shore who calls out to them and tells them to cast out their nets one more time, and their nets overflow with fish. It is Jesus, and he is preparing them to continue ministry in his name.

*By staying close to you, Lord, I will be able to minister in your name. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 8 Acts 1:6-14**

*“They joined together constantly in prayer”*

 As the disciples left the Mount of Olives and made their way to an upper room above a street in Jerusalem, they must have wondered what would happen next. Jesus had promised a kingdom which would be different from what they expected, and he had assured them that he would come again. What were they to do to prepare for his return? They dared not be seen out and about in the city, for surely they would be arrested. So, they gathered together with other followers of the Lord and they prayed.

 Prayer was the key way in which the disciples prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The connection between prayer and the work of the Spirit is well established in the Bible. We know that it was ten days between Jesus’ ascension and the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the believers gathered in that very room. This shows us the importance of persistent prayer. They didn’t simply get together and offer one particular prayer, but were constantly in prayer until God determined that they were ready to receive the amazing gift of his Spirit.

*We join together, Lord, and pray for the Spirit’s power and guidance. Amen.*