*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

December 27 – January 1

The Spirit in Jesus’ Ministry

**Monday, December 27 John 4:21-26**

“Worship the Father in spirit and in truth”

Just as “God is love” and “God is light,” so “God is spirit.” These phrases describe the ways God reveals himself and how he impacts people in our world. Therefore “worship in spirit” does not refer to the human spirit. It is worship that is wonderfully empowered by God’s Holy Spirit.

“Spirit and truth” are not two separate features but one inseparable concept. (In the Greek, one preposition governs “spirit and truth.”) This is worship empowered by the Spirit of God but also informed by the revelation of God and provided to humans by the One who is the truth, Jesus Christ. Later Jesus will refer to this Spirit as “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:14; 15:26). This is worship not tied to holy places but impacted by a holy Person, who through his cross will bring into existence the era in which the Holy Spirit will change everything.

*Dear Jesus. Just as you taught the Samaritan woman, so you teach me that you are the Truth and true worship of God is through you and in the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**Tuesday, December 28 Mark 1:21-28**

“He taught as one who had real authority”

The gospel reveals that Jesus’ authority derives from the Spirit of God who came on him at his baptism. Even the crowds of people who are unaware of the Spirit’s work can see that Jesus speaks for God and not simply about God, as the religious teachers do. Judaism had become a book religion, and the teachers of religious law had authority because of their expertise in sacred Scripture and tradition. But, unlike Jesus, they did not claim direct revelation from God.

Mark does not tell us precisely what feature of Jesus’ teaching exhibits authority in contrast to that of the religious teachers. Nevertheless, the passage reveals that Jesus couples his teaching with mighty deeds - certainly one key difference. The teachers simply make theological pronouncements; Jesus comes with the authority of God to dismantle the evil power of Satan. He confronts demons with destruction and Judaism with new teaching. Consequently, both demons and the religious authorities will be threatened by him.

*Lord Jesus Christ. The authority you revealed is still in force today. I submit myself to the truth you teach and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I will live by it. Amen.*

**Wednesday, December 29 John 5:19-30**

“Whatever the Father does, the Son also does”

Too often Jesus is described as having been simply a nice man. Some may call him a charismatic teacher, and some may elevate him to a dispenser of religious wisdom or consider him a prophet. Some prefer to see in him a model of the spiritual life. What all this means is that Jesus and the faith that bears his name, Christianity, is seen pluralistically as one among many equally legitimate religions. The trouble with these descriptions is that they omit a key ingredient to the New Testament’s message about Jesus: He is the Son of God!

Jesus Christ makes ultimate claims for himself in the Gospels. Nowhere is that more obvious than in this passage from John 5. It is not simply that Jesus is doing the Father’s business that makes him unique; it is that Jesus has a relationship with the Father that goes beyond anything humanity has seen before. In John 10:30 Jesus says, “The Father and I are one,” and in John 14:9 Jesus says to Philip, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

*Jesus, my Savior. I believe in you and in the Father who sent you. Thank you for your promise to raise me from the dead and to give me eternal life with you. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

December 27 – January 1

The Spirit in Jesus’ Ministry

**Thursday, December 30 Acts 10:34-38**

“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power“

Peter’s words are meant to show his audience that Jesus’ ministry was approved by God as he points out that the life and miracles of Jesus demonstrate that Jesus was God’s special messenger. These good deeds and miracles of Jesus are associated with his anointing by the Holy Spirit, a reference to what happened when the dove descended on Jesus at his baptism.

Peter’s message is an important model for us in presenting the gospel to devout people who may know something about God but are unaware of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter focuses on the life of Christ beginning with John’s baptismal ministry and goes on to tell of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee. In the verses that follow this passage, Peter speaks of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, with the offer of forgiveness through faith in him here.

*Heavenly Father. You anointed your Son by your Holy Spirit, and it is by the Spirit’s power that Jesus fulfilled your will. May I also receive the anointing of your Spirit in my life so that I may have the power to do your will. Amen.*

**Friday, December 31 Luke 4:1-13**

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit . . . was led by the Spirit into the wilderness”

Before beginning his ministry, Jesus faces off with Satan after being led by the Holy Spirit into the desert. What occurs here, therefore, takes place under God’s direction. Jesus’ successful encounter with the devil reveals how thoroughly dedicated he is to God’s will and call. Jesus will take only the road God asks him to follow. He will not take any shortcuts. He knows that a successful walk with God only goes where the Father leads.

The event is built around three distinct temptations. Two of them specifically bring into question Jesus’ sonship: “If you are the Son of God . . . “ Satan’s motive is to lure Jesus into acting independently of the Father and thus create a rebellious relationship between the two. In each case, Jesus uses Scripture to counter Satan’s attempt.

*Dear God. I know that I daily face the temptation to act independently of you. As a believer in Jesus who is anointed by the Spirit to be Jesus’ follower, give me strength to withstand every scheme of the devil to rebel against you. Amen.*

**Saturday, January 1 Luke 4:14-21**

“The Spirit of the Lord . . . has anointed me to . . .”

In these verses, Luke introduces and summarizes the general character of Jesus’ ministry. Since Galilee is Jesus’ home, it is not surprising that his ministry begins there. As with his temptations, Jesus is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit which shows us how Jesus continues to be responsive to God’s leading.

In the synagogue, Jesus reads a text from Isaiah which begins by declaring that the Spirit is on the speaker. Since Jesus speaks of himself as fulfilling this text, he is the one to whom the text applies. This anointing of Jesus by the Spirit looks back to the descent of the Spirit on Jesus at his baptism by John.

Jesus makes three points in the passage: (1) He is anointed by the Spirit to perform a specific ministry; (2) he is a prophet who declares the arrival of the new era of God’s kingdom; and (3) he will bring about the Kingdom that he proclaims. These combine to declare that he is both prophet who speaks the word of God and Messiah (which means “anointed one”) who brings salvation.

*I praise you, Son of God, as the anointed of the Father who has come in the power of the Spirit to bring salvation to all held in the bondage of sin. Amen*