*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 4 - 9

*Palm Sunday*

**Monday, April 4 John 12:12-19**

*“The news that Jesus was on his way swept through the city”*

Lazarus has been raised from the dead! The word is out! There are witnesses who have seen it. Now the One who raised him is on his way to Jerusalem in spite of all the earlier threats from the religious leaders. This is surely our Messiah who is coming to take over. The excitement is palpable. What mighty hopes and expectations they have. If Jesus has raised a man from the dead, surely he can set them free from the shackles of Rome.

Jesus answers the pressure and expectations of this frenzied crowd with a prophetic, but simple, act. He enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. Had Jesus come to fulfill the earthly, nationalistic ambitions of these people he would have ridden a horse, as a warrior liberator. Not even the disciples understood what this all meant until much later when they were enlightened by the Spirit. The raising of Lazarus was not a sign of nationalistic glory for Israel, but a promise that when the Messiah comes he will share the gift of healing and life with all his people.

*We receive you on your terms, Jesus, not on ours. Amen.*

**Tuesday, April 5 John 12:20-26**

*“We want to meet Jesus”*

The Greeks who want to meet Jesus represent the children of God who are not of Jewish descent. These are God-fearing Gentiles who have come for the Passover feast. They seek out Philip because they can identify with him. His name is Greek and he comes from a predominately Gentile area. He is the easiest for them to approach, one of their own “social network.” Philip seems not quite certain what to do with their request, so he shares it with Andrew. Together they go to Jesus who at first seems to ignore it.

Jesus replies that his hour of glory has come. So often he has said it will come, and now it is here. The request of the Gentiles, who represent a waiting world, is the sign that the time to lay down his life has arrived. His own death is like the parable of the grain of wheat which must go into the ground if there is to be a harvest. There will be no salvation for the world, Jew and Gentile alike, unless he dies. So Jesus is not ignoring the Greeks. They will indeed meet Jesus through the faithful witness and ministry of obedient disciples.

*You died for the world, Jesus, and that includes me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, April 6 John 12:27-33**

*“My soul is troubled”*

Jesus does not go easily or casually to the cross. His humanity shrinks from this awesome death. Here the anguish, the longing of Jesus to avoid the cross, is boldly recorded. But there is no turning back from the plan of God. Jesus has come into the world in loving obedience to the Father’s will and every move of his ministry has been in keeping with that plan. His faithfulness has brought him to this hour. And there will never be a harvest of the saved unless Jesus completes his mission. So the trembling, questioning cry, “Father, save me from this hour,” is answered by his decisive prayer of obedience, “Father, bring glory to you name.”

Then, as at his baptism and his transfiguration, the Father’s voice is heard. His name has been glorified throughout all of Jesus’ ministry, and now in this hour Jesus will glorify it again. That voice could have been a moment of awakening for the crowd, making them aware of the critical importance of this hour. But they are confused, incapable of hearing the voice of the Father, just as they have been unable to hear the word of his Son.

*Through my obedience, Jesus, glory is brought to the Father’s name. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 4 - 9

*Palm Sunday*

**Thursday, April 7 John 12:34-36**

*“How can you say the Son of Man will die?”*

The crowds who have just celebrated Jesus’ kingship as he entered Jerusalem now hear clearly what Jesus is intending. A grain of wheat must die; Jesus must lose his life; Jesus will be lifted up; all of this will bring about his glorification. This is perplexing because according to popular belief in Judaism, the Messiah would not be a victim; rather, he would triumph over his foes and establish Israel as his permanent kingdom. Jesus’ words seem incomprehensible. “Who is this ‘Son of Man’?” is not a request for Jesus to identify himself (i.e., “Are you the Son of Man?”), but a question that asks: “What sort of Son of Man or Messiah is this who speaks of his death?”

Jesus denies them an answer, refusing to enter into speculation about the theological role of the Messiah in popular thought. Instead he appeals to them to believe. Now the urgent tone of his appeal is based on the limited opportunity of the crowd. Jesus is the light, but it will not shine for them much longer. Therefore the crowd must make a choice and make it quickly before the light disappears.

*I was in darkness, Jesus, but then I accepted you as the light of my life. Amen.*

**Friday, April 8 John 12:37-43**

*“Most of the people did not believe in him”*

Here at the conclusion of Jesus’ public ministry John is compelled to ponder the darkness of unbelief. John has witnessed Jesus facing the stubborn misunderstanding and angry rejection of the very ones who should have accepted him at every turn. John uses the words of Isaiah to declare that they have neither heard nor understood Jesus’ teaching from the Father. “Who has believed our message?” And they have belittled and spurned Jesus’ mighty works of provision and healing. “To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm?”

Then John refers to the words the Lord spoke to Isaiah when he called him to be a prophet. The longer Isaiah would faithfully call his people home, the more their eyes would be blinded and their hearts hardened. This is a mysterious and dark passage. The repeated rejection of the Lord, although he lovingly deals with his people, is an old and sad story. Does this mean that the door is closed? No, for God is gracious, and in spite of the rejection of his Son by many, those who do believe and receive him are given the power to become children of God.

*Though many reject you, Jesus, I have accepted you as my Lord and Savior. Amen.*

**Saturday, April 9 John 12:44-50**

*“Jesus shouted to the crowds”*

Jesus makes a last public plea for belief, probably in the court of the temple. For John this is a final theological summary, comprising the main themes that have been publicly revealed in the ministry of Jesus: Jesus has been sent by the Father; the Father is the sole authority in his ministry; he is light shining in darkness, bringing salvation and eternal life to those who show faith. But Jesus also gives a warning. His words will remain as a deposit of revelation by which human lives will be judged.

Without doubt, the presence of the Father in the life and work of Jesus is the reality John does not want us to miss. His gospel began with the lofty description of Jesus’ origins with God himself. Throughout the course of the book we have read about how this light from God has been shining in the darkness. The greatest error of all is for man or woman to see this light and reject it, thinking it has no connection with God. When the world sees Jesus, when the world makes a decision about Jesus, it is really making a decision about God.

*I have seen the light, Jesus, and it has brought me to God. Amen.*