*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 18 – July 23

*Walking with Abraham*

**Monday, July 18 Genesis 18:1-5**

*“If it pleases you, stop here for a while’”*

 In verse 1, we are told that the Lord appears to Abraham in the form of three men. Does Abraham know that these men are representatives of the presence of God? The answer is not clear. Regardless of their identity, Abraham invites them into his home.

 I have never been very good at invitations. I have always operated with an “open-door” policy. It is much easier to simply *assume* that others will know that they are welcome and find their way into my home. Unfortunately, what makes sense in my mind rarely is rooted in the reality of daily life. Specifically, *if I haven’t invited anyone in, my home is less likely to be prepared to receive others.* I may desire to have company, but if there is no lemonade in the refrigerator, my welcoming thoughts are empty.

 The same is true in our relationship with the Lord. Inviting God into our lives will encourage us to prepare for him. We will take stock of our lives, asking ourselves where we need his grace and discipline. An invitation to the Lord is great way to engender transformation.

*Lord, I invite you into the home of my heart. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 19 Genesis 18:6-8**

*“Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees”*

 Welcoming these three strangers into his home, Abraham washes their feet and asks Sarah to bake her best bread; he then slaughters a tender calf to serve them for dinner. For Abraham, the identity of these men is of no consequence. Abraham sees it as his responsibility to practice the same radical hospitality that the Lord has shown to him. He was a stranger in a strange land, and the Lord welcomed him to it, transforming it into his home.

 As followers of Christ, we are asked to practice this same radical hospitality. Putting aside the conventional demarcations used by the world to divide us, we are commanded by God to welcome all as guests in our home. Afterall, the home in which we dwell was not built by us. It is the gracious gift of a God who loves us and welcomes us as sons and daughters. The Lord’s hospitality is rooted in the gift of Jesus Christ. Salvation is the most radical hospitality of all, and it frees us to wait on others.

*Lord, help me to practice radical hospitality. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 20 Genesis 18:9-15**

*“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”*

 The men tell Abraham that this time next year, Sarah will have a son! Her response: laughter. Why does Sarah laugh? Certainly, the idea of bearing children at her age to a husband even older is comical on some level. Perhaps a part of her is finally acknowledging the absurdity of the Hagar proposal. Maybe she’s simply exhausted and her laughter is an involuntary response to the stress and anxiety that has surrounded her attempts to bear Abraham a descendant. It is in the face of this laughter that verse 13 reintroduces God’s presence: *Then the Lord said to Abraham…Is anything too hard for the Lord?*

 Is anything too hard for the Lord? Certainly not. We probably acknowledge this fact on a philosophical level; we *know* that God can do anything. Yet, philosophical acknowledgment is not the same as personal faith. Faith is rooted in experience. We know God can do anything because in his son Jesus Christ, the Lord has already done everything. If Christ is victorious over sin, nothing is now impossible. Faced with the challenges of this world, let each of us laugh knowing that the Lord is already victorious.

*Lord, nothing is too hard for you. Amen.*

 *DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 18 – July 23

*Walking with Abraham*

**Thursday, July 21 Genesis 18:16-21**

*“I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah?”*

 Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the sin and brokenness in the world? As I look back on the past three years, I can’t help but feel like they have been the most tumultuous in recent memory. Between COVID-19, political upheaval, and international instability, it is easy to feel as though the brokenness of our world is winning. Watching the suffering of so many around the world, we cry out to God, “Lord, are you listening?”

 I imagine the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah felt the same. The evil and sin of these cities were notorious. The inhabitants had a well-known reputation for disregarding God’s call to holiness- to being set apart for his work in the world. In the midst of the consequences of this prideful arrogance, the people cry out to God. They ask the same question: “Lord, are you listening?”

 Verse 20 gives God’s answer: *I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah*. The Lord has heard the cry of the people, and he responding to it. This should come as good news to all of us. When we cry out to God, our cries do not fall on deaf ears. The Lord hears us and responds according to his good will.

*Lord, you hear my cries and respond. Thank you for your faithfulness. Amen.*

**Friday, July 22 Genesis 18:22-26**

*“Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?”*

 In the face of God’s anger towards Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham asks the Lord a pointed question: *Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?* Abraham is concerned for the inhabitants of the cities, and he hopes to avoid their destruction at God’s hand. From his perspective, God’s actions are too severe; a good God would not respond so harshly to the world’s sin.

 I sympathize with Abraham. The thought of God destroying an entire city leaves me with an uneasy feeling in my stomach. Genesis 18, like other stories in the Old Testament, is difficult to digest. However, we ought to be grateful for the severity of God’s response. Why? God seeks the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah *because he takes sin so seriously*. Sin cannot go unpunished. If it is allowed to persist, then good cannot conquer evil.

 So, should we fear God’s judgment? No! For in Jesus Christ, God’s judgment and wrath are extinguished in himself. In other words, God stands in our place. He faces destruction so that we might be blameless before him. This is Good News.

*Lord, thank you for taking my sin seriously and conquering it on the cross. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 23 Genesis 18:27-33**

*“Please don’t be angry, my Lord”*

 I cringe every time Abraham opens his mouth and says, “Suppose there are only…” I want to reach into the pages of scripture, grab Abraham by the shoulders, and shake him vigorously while yelling, “Stop it! Stop arguing with God!” I can’t help but feel embarrassed for Abraham. Why doesn’t he just keep his mouth shut and let God be God?

 God doesn’t seem to feel the same way. Hearing each intercession, God patiently responds to Abraham, addressing his concerns. Verses 27-33 remind us that the Lord welcomes us into a relationship marked by open communication. He wants us to engage him with our questions, thoughts, and concerns. God is patient, and his love for us is such that there is no question or topic too small for his concern. His care for us knows no limits.

*Lord, I will bring all my thoughts and concerns to you. Amen.*