*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

September 12 - 17

“The Lost Younger Son”

**Monday, September 12 Luke 15:11-24**

*“The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now’”*

 The younger son knew exactly what he was he doing. He thumbed his nose at his father and took off for the far country because he chose to. How is this lost young man found? The Scripture suggests it is not the result of some great spiritual awakening. Being found does not require getting your act cleaned up and changing your life style. The turning point comes when this willfully lost young man “comes to himself,” which simply suggests that he makes a wise choice. He says, “This is stupid. I don’t need to live like this. I have a home and a father. Maybe he will take me back as a servant.”

 The reassuring truth of Jesus’ parable is that you and I have a home in God. When we’re lost, it’s because we have strayed from the place we were meant to be. We have within us a God-shaped space, and nothing other than God will fill that space – not marriage, children, job, money, or success. The story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 is our story. When we left the garden, we left the presence of God and we have been homesick ever since.

*I was made for life with you, Lord, and I praise you for giving me that life. Amen.*

**Tuesday, September 13 Matthew 11:20-24**

*“Woe to you”*

 Jesus makes it abundantly clear that there are consequences for rejecting his gospel message, and especially for those who have been privileged to witness the powerful evidences for the truth of that message. Capernaum, Korazin, and Bethsaida – what some have called the “Evangelical Triangle” – were the cities in which most of Jesus’ miracles had been performed. They have rejected Jesus’ mission, so on them each are pronounced a series of “woes” which is a cry that includes regret, compassion, sorrow, and denunciation.

 The privilege of witnessing Jesus’ miraculous ministry should have moved the people within the Evangelical Triangle to repent and accept the invitation to enter the kingdom of heaven. Especially Capernaum, his own city, which was privileged to be the headquarters of his Galilean ministry, should have repented in “sackcloth and ashes” which were familiar symbols of repentance. By contrast, Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities north of Palestine known for their worship of idols, and Sodom was the proverbial Old Testament city of sin.

*May all who hear your message turn to you, Lord, and be saved. Amen.*

**Wednesday, September 14 Matthew 15:21-28**

*“Your faith is great”*

 In this passage, it is initially shocking that Jesus seems ready to ignore the request of the woman simply because she is a non-Israelite. Jesus is not demonstrating some sort of ethnic bigotry against Gentiles but is emphasizing the priority of Israel. His mission is first to Israel; eventually the whole world will be blessed through Israel. Jesus will develop this plan further through his disciples when he sends them out into “all the world,” but here we get a peek at the broader ministry that Jesus has not yet begun.

 Jesus’ going to the region of Tyre and Sidon was not to preach the gospel there (that would come later) but to get some relief from the lack of faith of his fellow Jews. But, his eventual healing of this Gentile woman’s daughter shows his heart. In the same way that he had compassion on the people of Israel, who were like sheep without a shepherd, he has compassion on a little girl and her mother, who are like dogs without a scrap of hope, and he responds. In either case, his response is to those who have eyes of faith to see him.

*Lord, you respond to all who come to you in faith. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

September 12 - 17

“The Lost Younger Son”

**Thursday, September 15 Psalm 119:169-176**

*“I have wandered away like a lost sheep”*

 The final 8-verse section in the 119th Psalm speaks of the relationship between the psalmist’s faithfulness to the word of God and the sheer gift of life that it brings. Rather than viewing the commandments of God as onerous or burdensome, the author concludes this majestic work of poetry by stressing that they are an extension of God’s life-giving work among his people. Given the poet’s resolve throughout this psalm to follow the law of God, verse 176 may seem incongruent with the poem as a whole. In this final verse, the psalmist declares that he has “wandered away like a lost sheep.”

 Throughout the entirety of Psalm 119 the psalmist acknowledges that his hope rests with the word and work of God. Even though the psalmist remains faithful to God’ word and leans into its promises, the psalmist remains in need of God’s work of redemption from the struggles of life. He concludes the psalm by confessing that, while he has not forgotten the commandments of God, he is a frail creature, a “lost sheep,” who stands in need of the mercy of God.

*Though I seek to obey you, Lord, I stray and need you to come and find me. Amen.*

**Friday, September 16 Romans 3:21-26**

*“But now . . .”*

 It has been said that there are no more wonderful two words in the whole Bible than these: “But now.” Over and over again in the New Testament, these two words are used to contrast the state of people or the world outside Christ, with the situation in Christ. I encourage you to take a few minutes to read passages such as Romans 6:21-22; Romans 7:5-6; Romans 16:25-27; Galatians 4:8-9; Ephesians 2:11-13; Colossians 1:21-22; Colossians 3:7-8; Hebrews 12:26; 1Peter 2:25. And, there are many more!

 As these passages reveal, the “but now” transition can refer to what God did in Christ to bring in the new age in which salvation is available to all people, or it can refer to the personal experience of transfer from the old life of sin and death to the new life of being a faithful follower of Jesus Christ and being assured of eternal life with God. “Once” we were far from God, alienated from him, stumbling in darkness, and destined for hell. “But now” we have been brought near to God and we enjoy all the benefits of belonging to God’s own people.

*I once was blind but now I see, Lord, was lost but now I’m found. Amen.*

**Saturday, September 17 John 8:31-38**

*“A son or a daughter is a member of the family forever”*

 John tells us that some in the crowd believed in Jesus. But how deeply are they committed, and how long will it last? Will they repent of their sinful habits and in faith submit themselves in obedience to the One whom the Father has sent? How will they handle the pressure of their leaders, and being shunned and ostracized by their critical, unbelieving neighbors?

 Jesus makes utterly clear the terms of discipleship for these who believe him. He does not seek short-term followers, easy starters, who will fall by the wayside. They must “abide” in him if they are to be a part of his company. They must not only hear what he teaches, but abide in his word, be at home in it! This means not only hearing, but obeying him, sitting at his feet, living under his authority. The one whose faith is shallow is like a slave who can be put out of the household at any moment. Only through deep faithfulness to Jesus Christ will his disciples know that they are true sons and daughters of God, permanent members of God’s family, who will live in the house of the Lord forever.

*I will continue to abide in you, Lord, for I desire to be a true child of God. Amen.*