*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

May 1 - 6

“Ask . . . Seek . . . Knock”

**Monday, May 1 Matthew 21:18-22**

*“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for”*

 The appearance of leaves on a fig tree was a promise of the sweet early fig. But this tree is unproductive, with no figs at all, and becomes an object lesson for Jesus to use to indicate Israel’s spiritual condition (cf. Hosea 9:10, where Israel is compared to a fruitful fig tree). Just as the fig tree’s fruitfulness was a sign of its health, so spiritual fruitfulness was a sign of Israel’s faithfulness to God. But Israel, especially represented by its religious leadership, has not accepted Jesus as the Messiah. They do not have the fruit of faith.

 Jesus’ cursing the fig tree is not a fit of temper but a symbolic act, demonstrating that God’s creatures must produce that for which they were created – to carry out God’s will, which means entering into a relationship with him and then demonstrating fruit from that relationship in a life of faith empowered by prayer. The point here is not the disciples’ amount of faith to do great things but rather their trust in accomplishing God’s will in God’s power. If God directs them to move a mountain, God will supply the power for it to be accomplished.

*I pray that the fruit of my life will give evidence of my faith in you, Lord. Amen.*

**Tuesday, May 2 John 14:12-14**

*“You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it”*

 After his resurrection and ascension to the Father, the Son will be evident in the world through men and women who are united with him in faith. Their works will bring glory to the Father as the Gospel is shared and people come into a relationship with Jesus as their Lord and Savior. In this way, the Father will continue the saving work of his Son through his disciples. However, it is only as these disciples pray in the name of Jesus that people will be saved and the mighty work begun by Jesus will continue and expand.

 The test of all Christian prayer is whether it is in the name of Jesus, offered out of our life in him, and gives glory to the Father. Can we be trusted with the name of Jesus as he was with the Father’s name? So much of what we do in our Christian churches is temporary and seems to be all about this world. It may win compliments and approval of other church people, and even of non-believers, but if it does not give glory to God by proclaiming salvation in Jesus Christ, it matters little and it will not last.

*In your name, Jesus, we proclaim salvation through faith in you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 3 John 15:5-8**

*“Without me you can do nothing”*

 Jesus’ intimate relationship with his disciples cannot be stated in precise, theological terms. So he uses the motif of a vine and its branches to illustrate spiritual truth. His union with these followers is as alive as the relationship of the vine to its branches. Jesus is the true vine. In the Old Testament writings, Israel had frequently been spoken of as the vine which God loved and tended. But over and over again, waywardness and corruption had made God’s people barren. Now it is Jesus who is the real vine, the Chosen One from God.

 The fruit that the disciples bear is not what they do, but the life of Jesus in them. It is his character reproduced within them and shared with others in love. This cannot come to pass without the disciple abiding in Jesus, making his home in him as Jesus makes his home in the disciple. Jesus’ life is shared with the disciples as their life is given to him. So Jesus can say, “Without me you can do nothing.” No amount of ingenious planning or restless activity or sponsoring of “spiritual” events on our own can produce this fruit.

*I stay close to you, Jesus, so that in me you can bear fruit. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

May 1 - 6

“Ask . . . Seek . . . Knock”

**Thursday, May 4 John 15:9-17**

*“Produce fruit that will last . . . in my name”*

  The union between Jesus and his disciples is not an external arrangement, but an internal, personal relationship. Jesus tells them that their union is defined by love: the Son loves the disciples as the Father loves the Son. This Father/Son love has sought them out, called them into eternal life, and now sends them out into the world to continue Jesus’ Gospel-sharing mission. However, there is no mission, no fruit borne, without prayer in Jesus’ name. This is no hit-and-miss surface asking, but a life of prayer for the mission’s continuing in union with Jesus.

 Now these disciples are to love one another as Jesus loves them. This is not an option, but a command albeit one that is only possible to keep if they abide in Jesus’ love. This love is not a vague, sentimental feeling that comes and goes, but a tough reality that is always revealed in obedience. The Son shares in and shows forth his Father’s love by absolute obedience to all the Father’s commands, even the commands that will take him to the cross. As his disciples, we can only abide in the love of Jesus if we keep his commandments.

*I pray that the mission of sharing your Gospel, Lord, will continue through me. Amen.*

**Friday, May 5 James 1:5-8**

*“If you need wisdom ask God, and he will gladly tell you”*

 Wisdom comes from God. In the New Testament generally, wisdom is connected with understanding God’s purposes and plan and indicates a determination to live accordingly. We need wisdom to know how to cope with trials, for wisdom provides a clear view of our situation from God’s perspective. With wisdom we perceive that what the world calls misfortune, whatever its source, is an opportunity for God to bring about his purpose. Wisdom as the gift of God logically leads to our asking for it.

 But we must ask without doubt, that is, without waffling back and forth. Honest intellectual doubts are not in view here. After all, to doubt is human. David, for example, gives voice to his doubts about the character and trustworthiness of God (cf. Psalm 96:1). Yet in the midst of this honest doubt, David is reminded of all that God has done for him in the past, and he gains the hope necessary to continue. Faith understands and has experienced the character of God, who gives freely and generously; because of this, such a person has confidence.

*I prayerfully seek your wisdom for my life, Lord, and commit to live by it. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 6 Matthew 7:7-11**

*“Your heavenly Father will give good gifts to those who ask him”*

 The walk with God is a walk of prayer, a life in fellowship with him. And as we pray we need to understand the kind of God to whom we are praying. It is this knowledge which undergirds our faith, for faith is not a blind wish; it is response to evidence. The more we understand God the more our faith is developed. The threefold emphasis on prayer in this section is answered by the statement in verse 11 about the goodness of God. A parent is good to their child – how much more good will God be to us, his children, when we pray.

 The threefold statement to ask, seek, and knock is both command and invitation. These words are present imperatives in the Greek which mean continuous action. Ask and keep asking. This may suggest persistent effort, but more likely it is the recognition that we are invited to continually come to God. We should not think that, having asked once, we are presumptuous to ask again. In fact the progression of the words “ask,” “seek,” “knock” may suggest growing awareness of our dependence upon God.

*When I pray, Lord, you answer me with goodness and love. Amen.*