*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 15 - 20

“Wisdom: hearing *and* doing”

**Monday, May 15 Ezekiel 33:30-32**

*“They have no intention of doing what I tell them”*

  Ezekiel’s prophetic message appears to have a kind of popularity among the people to whom he is speaking, and he has become the subject of conversations in the cities and doorways. To use a contemporary analogy, he is the toast of the talk shows. But the interest is superficial. The people listen to his words but do not put them into practice, regarding them as an intriguing phenomenon rather than a life-changing reality. His fame is like that of a pop star whose declarations on spiritual matters may arouse curiosity but are scarcely accorded authoritative status. People may have been humming along to his tune, but they are paying no attention to the true meaning of his lyrics.

 In our churches today, and through Christian media, some people listen but never learn or do. For them, as for some of Ezekiel’s hearers, the message is merely an entertainment, not a life-changing truth. Like the seed that fell on rocky ground in the parable of the sower, there is no substance to their claim to faith.

*May I feel the power of your Word in my heart, Lord, and may it change me. Amen.*

**Tuesday, May 16 Psalm 1:1-6**

*“Blessed are those who do not join the scoffers”*

  The “scoffer” at the end of verse 1 (also translated “mocker”) hears the Word of God and speaks jeeringly against it. The Psalm warns against such a response to God’s Word and instead encourages meditation and action. It invites us to let what we hear, read, and study so permeate our being that our life journeys on the path laid out by God. When we do so we will be truly blessed. Then, even people of small faith, empowered by God when they hear and obey what God says, will live joyful, miraculous lives.

 It is important to note that what the psalm cautions against is adopting the attitude and lifestyle of the wicked, not all contact with them and especially not the kind of loving association that Jesus modeled in his relationship with “sinners.” The warning is against taking the “way” or path of the wicked, standing with them, and ultimately taking up residence in their territory. The kind of association with unbelievers Jesus models is an essential part of our life as the bearers of the Gospel.

*I delight in your Word, Lord, and I seek to obey it. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 17 Matthew 21:28-32**

 *“He said, ‘I will not go,’ but later he regretted it and went”*

 The two sons in Jesus’ story represent two groups of persons. The first son said he would not go and work. Afterward he changed his mind and went – illustrative of people who hear the Word of God and at first refuse to do anything about it, but later they respond in obedience. The second son said he would go and work but didn’t do what he had promised – illustrative of people who hear the word of God and outwardly give the impression that they are living in obedience to it, but in actuality they are not putting it into practice.

 Persons who have said no in the past to obeying God’s Word can change their minds and seek to follow his will in the present. This desire to change can have a powerful impact on our lives. While we may not succeed immediately in our obedience, our intentionality will go a long way to helping us follow Christ as God desires. But, those who play games with their faith, outwardly nodding and agreeing with everything Jesus says but inwardly refusing to obey, will one day risk hearing Jesus say, “I never knew you.”

*I praise you, Lord, for your mercy which allows me to change. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 15 - 20

“Wisdom: hearing *and* doing”

**Thursday, May 18 Deuteronomy 30:15-20**

*“Chose to obey the Lord your God, for he is your life”*

  The options in the choice set before the people are the most important that anyone has to face: *life and good* on the one hand, or *death and evil* on the other. The choice has been set down in the clearest terms: the law of God has been stated; the history of God’s dealing with his people has been called to mind; the basic operating principle of love has been affirmed; the potential future, with both blessings and curses, has been declared. Now the matter comes down to a decision that has to be made by the people.

 The making of a decision, however, involves more than simple agreement; it involves a whole way of life based on that decision: *if you listen to the commandments . . . loving the Lord your God . . . walking in his ways . . . then you shall live.* This ready and loving obedience is the catalyst, so to speak, which releases the full force of God’s promises to bless his children. However, *if your mind turns aside . . . you do not listen . . . you bow down to other gods . . . you shall certainly die.* God cannot bless those who reject his love.

*I chose to obey you, Lord, that you may bless me with life and goodness. Amen.*

**Friday, May 19 James 1:22-25**

*“It is a message to obey, not just to listen to”*

 “Doing” the Word of God is at the very center of the practical teaching of James. We must not merely give lip service or mental assent to the truth of God’s Word. We must live it out in action. James presents two important points. First, “Do not merely listen to the Word.” Listening is terribly important. But it is not enough. Our lives can become spiritually stagnant like the Dead Sea, which has water flowing into it from the Jordan River but no outlet and so becomes stale, when we only receive the Word of God but do not translate it into appropriate action.

 Second, “Do what the Word says to do.” The person who hears without acting is like a man who looks in a mirror and then forgets what he looks like. James’s point is that the image in the mirror, whether the product of a quick glance or a long gaze, is quickly forgotten. But, the person who looks into the Word of God and acts on it is blessed, for this will allow the believer to grow into what God intends as they are daily putting into practice the will of God for their life.

*I am blessed, Lord, when I put your Word into action in my life. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 20 Matthew 7:24-27**

*“Anyone who listens to my teaching and obeys me is wise”*

 Jesus’ sermon has come to its conclusion, one which calls for action. The choice is now with the hearers; having heard, they will or they will not do his will. To drive home this reality, Jesus uses an illustration from the building of houses. The illustration comes from his own knowledge of carpentry, for he had done such work with his father. The illustration was also based on the realities of the land, for there were many valleys which were dry gulleys in the summer but which, during the rains, became filled with torrents of rushing water.

 Above all, the illustration speaks to the nature of Christian discipleship, for we are building the character and spiritual behavior of a godly life as we walk with him. Such building calls for a good and sure foundation. This was exactly what Jesus was providing through his teaching which he identifies clearly with himself as he speaks of “these sayings of mine.” His teaching is not a repetition of what others have taught, but a unique and authoritative interpretation of the will of God for his people.

*I will build my life on your teaching, Lord, and so be strong in you. Amen.*