

JOURNEY
THROUGH JOHN

40
DAYS
of
JOHN

A LENTEN DAILY DEVOTIONAL

by the pastors of First Presbyterian Church of Nashville

WEEK 5

SUNDAY

Take time today to reflect on the readings from this past week, reread some of the most meaningful passages, or catch up on any devotionals you missed. Rest in the grace of God that is freely and extravagantly given today and every day.

DAY 23

MONDAY, MARCH 23

READ

John 12:27-50

REFLECT

One of the primary themes we find repeated throughout John's gospel is that of light and darkness. In the very first chapter we find the poetic prologue about the light coming into the world, shining in the darkness. And now we are revisiting this same idea as Jesus speaks about his death. As we inch closer to the cross, we see that the powers of darkness are at work and will soon extinguish the Light of the world. However, that of course is not the end of the story.

What do you think John was referring to when he talked about the darkness in the world? Where in our world today do you see darkness?

RESPOND

Jesus is the Light of the World (8:12), and he is calling those who follow him to become "children of light" (v. 36). The word "Christian" literally means "little Christ." We are called to be like Christ – battling the darkness, shining our light, and staying close to the Father. What would that look like for us today? What challenges does this season of self-quarantine and "social distancing" pose for us to do this well? How do we allow our light to shine in the midst of the often-overwhelming darkness of this world?

PRAY

Holy God, you sent your Son, the Light of World, into our darkness. He shows us the way. He reveals the parts of us we'd like to hide. He dispels the power of sin and death. He is worth following. Help us to do so with boldness and faith. Reveal to us in this strange season of isolation, how to be "children of light" for this hurting world. Amen.

DAY 24

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

READ

John 13:1-20

REFLECT

This passage has always fascinated me. John is so intentional about making sure we remember that Judas was at that last supper. Judas the betrayer. Judas the liar. Judas the one whose kiss set off a series of events that forever changed the world. Judas is sitting at the table, and Jesus is fully aware of his presence and his purpose.

So when the Master bends low to wash the feet of the servants, he does not pass over Judas. He moves from overeager Peter, whose faith would soon crumble under the weight of fear, to Judas Iscariot. And he washes their feet. He serves even those he knows will betray him. Isn't that incredible? This isn't just a sweet gesture between friends, but a radical act of defiance in the face of hatred and fear.

RESPOND

Once again, Jesus instructs his friends to do what he has done to them to one another, "If I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." And we don't get to choose which feet "deserve" to be washed. Jesus modeled this indiscriminate loving kindness and service to everyone including his enemies.

Read the passage again and think of the people in your life who are easy for you to serve and love. Then, imagine those you struggle to love. Who is your "Judas"? Imagine taking their dirty, calloused feet in your hands and humbly washing them.

We're not supposed to be touching one another right now. So today, can you think of a way to love your neighbor (even with social distance)? What is a way you could love your enemy?

PRAY

Jesus, as you have loved me, help me to love others. Help me to see the blinders I put on when choosing who to serve and challenge me to broaden my vision that I might grow to be more like you in radical hospitality and grace. Amen.

DAY 25

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

READ

John 13:21-38

REFLECT

Today's passage touches the lowest point of discipleship and the highest challenge. Judas Iscariot begins his betrayal of Jesus, and Jesus foretells Peter's trice denial of Jesus. It is interesting that when Jesus proclaims one of the disciples will betray him, all the disciples were uncertain of whom he was speaking. They are uncertain as if it might be themselves. Mark even has each of them saying, "Is it I?" A very low point when any of the disciples might have betrayed Jesus; and Peter, their leader, is going to deny Jesus.

Yet, here we also find the pinnacle of Jesus' ministry. Jesus declares, "Now is the Son of Man glorified."

In Jesus' death, he is glorified. This glorification demonstrates his profound love. He lays down his life for us. This love is to be the sign of discipleship. By this love everyone will know his disciples.

RESPOND

If we are honest with ourselves, we too have betrayed and denied Jesus. At times we have said "no" to Jesus when he was asking us to follow. However, he calls us to be the community of love. The unbelievable gift is that Jesus empowers us to love.

PRAY

Jesus, fill me with your spirit. May your love flow through me this day. Amen.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

READ

John 14:1-14

REFLECT

In times like these, it's easy for us to join Thomas and Philip's requests of Jesus in John 14. Thomas asks, "Lord we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?" Our routines have been upset, our worlds have been flipped, and with COVID-19, we are wondering what do we do now?

Perhaps Jesus offers us the same response as he does Thomas. "I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." Maybe we respond like Philip does. "Show us the father and we'll be satisfied." How often do we ask, "Where is God?" or "God, it sure would be nice if I could see you, hear you, feel you, have some kind of a sign.?"

Jesus responds, "Have I been with you all this time and you still do not know me?" What do we do in this upside-down season? Which way do we go? Jesus is the way we go. Where is God in the midst of the coronavirus? According to John's gospel, the Father God and Jesus are one. Paul puts it this way, "In Jesus Christ, the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." If it's true that Jesus turns things upside down then maybe, just maybe, the coronavirus which has turned our lives upside down, is the exact angle we needed to be in to see God's activity in our lives. Perhaps you're stuck at home alone; God is present with you in the solitude. Perhaps your stuck at home with toddlers; the Holy Spirit is present in their call to come and play. Maybe you're stuck some place out of town with family and friends; God is present in the agenda-less time of being together. God is up to something . . . be a part of it.

RESPOND

How does the truth that Jesus is the Way call and impact us in these weeks of quarantine and social distancing? Where is the Way becoming incarnate in your life right now, and what would saying "yes" look like? Who could you call? Who could you pray with or for? What could you read? What could you write? Who could you play with, listen to, or encourage?

PRAY

God whose fullness dwells in Jesus Christ, comfort me, confront me, convict me, and call me. Grant me the courage to slow down and be with you. Grant me the creativity to connect in spite of distance, and grant me the compassion to love whoever I'm with wherever I am. In the name of the one who is with me here and now, the one who crosses the distance between heaven and earth, and who loved me first, Jesus Christ. Amen.

DAY 27

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

READ

John 14:15-31

REFLECT

Jesus has told His disciples that He is going to the Father and that He is the way, the truth and the life. Now Jesus prepares His disciples to become a community of His disciples following His death. First, Jesus links love of Him with obedience to His commandments. In the Gospel of John, Jesus' commandments are to love Jesus and thereby share in the mutual love of Jesus and God the Father (14:21b, 23) and to love one another (13:34). Second, Jesus promises His continuing presence through the Holy Spirit, or the Paraclete in Greek, variously translated as Comforter, Counselor, Advocate, Helper and the Spirit of Truth. The Holy Spirit will continue to teach Jesus' disciples and remind them of all that Jesus said and help His disciples to live in obedience to Jesus' commandments. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus' disciples will receive peace, and His disciples will never again be without the presence, the love and the comfort of Jesus Christ. As we are strengthened by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ and God the Father will dwell in our hearts and we will be grounded in His love.

RESPOND

Have you asked Jesus for the gift of the Holy Spirit? How can you become more aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life? Do you love Jesus enough to seek to keep His commandments above all else? How can the Holy Spirit help you to love Jesus more and be obedient to His commandments?

PRAY

Lord Jesus Christ, Thank You that You love me and for the gift of Your Holy Spirit. Strengthen me through Your Holy Spirit and bind my wandering heart to You. Help me to love You more as I receive Your love. May Your love overflow and be shared with the people around me each day. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

READ

John 15:1-17

REFLECT

Jesus has no misgivings about his identity. We might, but he does not. He is the vine. We are the branches. Where we often get into trouble is when we believe we are the vine or when we treat another person like our vine. I often use this passage when guiding couples through pre-marital counseling because that is such a temptation for newly engaged folks anticipating their life together through rose-colored glasses. It is tempting to see this person you are about to make a covenant with, the one you have fallen in love with and want to spend the rest of your life with, as your vine. It is tempting for two branches to try to survive off one another, but that doesn't work. There are no roots. Eventually both will wither. It is only when both branches are connected to the vine that they can survive.

But to truly thrive on the vine you must not only be connected, but you must "abide". This word has a rich meaning stretching beyond just spending time together, but truly being present, attentive, expectant. To abide in Jesus Christ, the vine, is to linger in his love and seek to align your will with his.

RESPOND

In verse 11 we hear Jesus say, "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete." A life of joy and abundance is found when we abide in Jesus. When we are attentive to his presence not just in our quiet times of prayer but in every facet of our living, we discover the deep joy of discipleship.

PRAY

Jesus, the True Vine, forgive me when I live as though I could survive apart from you. Draw me closer, reveal the complete joy that comes from following you, loving neighbor as myself, and surrendering my desire to be self-sufficient. Thank you for inviting me to abide in your love as I take a moment to do so now in stillness and silence. Amen.



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