

JOURNEY
THROUGH JOHN

40
DAYS
of
JOHN

A LENTEN DAILY DEVOTIONAL

by the pastors of First Presbyterian Church of Nashville

WEEK 6

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 29

MONDAY, MARCH 30

READ

John 15:19-27

REFLECT

I've found myself saying sometimes, "It's hard to find someone who dislikes Jesus. Even unbelievers applaud his compassion for the poor, or his cry for justice, or his wisdom that turns our worldly notions of success upside-down." After reading again John 15:18-27, I wonder how I could say such a thing!

If I haven't witnessed animosity toward Jesus, maybe I'm not following him bravely enough.

Stanley Hauerwas and Will Willimon wrote in *Resident Aliens*, "We believe both the conservative and the liberal church are basically accommodationist in their social ethic" (page 32). They mean that Christians have been more friendly to the world than loyal to Jesus. A telltale sign is the lack of animosity coming our way.

While no Christian needs to be "itchin' for a fight," perhaps we would do well to examine our lives for any way in which we find ourselves opposed to both liberals and conservatives, because of what Jesus said.

RESPOND

What would be a positive, confessional way for you to testify to Jesus, living his mission "that all the world might be saved"? Do you really want to pay a price for that?

PRAY

I can't have it both ways, Lord. I can't serve both You and anything else. Set up my idols and knock them down. Amen.

DAY 30

TUESDAY, MARCH 31

READ

John 16:1-15

REFLECT

Until a moment of revelation, being wrong feels like being right. In this world, people will think, act, and even attempt to convince others in error. This was an issue the first Christians faced, and one that Christians face today. The task of the Christian is to know God the Father, Jesus the Son, and be sensitive to the Spirit's guidance, so that we are not as the ones described in these first verses. It is an incredible task to take on. We are also aware that rarely are things black and white in this world. A faithful posture towards the Holy Spirit is required to know how to think and act in God's Kingdom.

RESPOND

Consider the question, "What is my current posture towards the Holy Spirit?" How do I cultivate an openness to the Spirit's guidance? Dare to wonder, "Have I been convinced of something that is against the will of God?"

PRAY

Lord, we desire to be faithful to Your Spirit's movement in this world. We ask for grace where we have erred, and give You thanks for the mercies You show us each day. May Your Spirit guide us in all truth. Amen.

DAY 31

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

READ

John 16:16-33

REFLECT

Jesus' disciples must have been very perplexed by Jesus' words. He has told His disciples that in a little while, He will depart to be with the Father and they will see Him no longer. But then in a little while, the disciples will see Him again. There is a theme of loss, suffering, even persecution, followed by joy and even peace. The illustration Jesus provides is of a pregnant woman who experiences pain and anguish in labor followed by the joy of the new life of her baby. What is the reason for joy and peace in a world where the disciples will face loss of loved ones, persecution, tribulation and sorrow? Jesus answers this question with these words: "Take courage; I have conquered the world." We do not need to live with fear and anxiety. We have the promise of Jesus that He loves us and He has conquered this world and all its suffering. Jesus Christ is the source of our joy and peace and new life.

PRAY

Dear Lord Jesus, Thank You that You have not left us alone in this world. Especially when we experience pain, sorrow, loss and persecution in the world, may we remember that You have conquered the world and You are with us even now. Help us to embrace Your gifts of joy and peace and love so strong that it defeats death. Thank You for Your gracious and abundant gifts to us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

DAY 32

THURSDAY, APRIL 2

READ

John 17:1-26

REFLECT

This passage is the transition from the last meal with his disciples and Jesus' passion. Jesus pauses and offers this great prayer. He prays for his glorification, for his disciples, and for us. Jesus prays for his glorification which is his completed work on the cross. The purpose of his glorification is to give us eternal life. Here is the only definition of eternal life in scripture: "that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Abundant life is to know God intimately through Jesus Christ. His prayer for his disciples is to have the same connection with God that Jesus has. This oneness will bring them joy, sanctify them, protect them from evil, send them into the world, and fill them with God's love. Jesus then prays that we who believe through the word of the disciples will have this same oneness with God.

Jesus does not pray for us to escape the world, but to be sent into the world so that the world might know the Father through the love of Christ present in us.

RESPOND

How can we open our hearts to this intimate presence of God and Jesus? During this pandemic we have been forced into isolation. Let us use this time to draw closer to God. Because of Jesus Christ's death, God is present in you. Feel the oneness. Feel the never-ending love.

PRAY

Gracious God, fill us with Your presence empowering us to love You and to love others so that the whole world might know You. Amen.

FRIDAY, APRIL 3

READ

John 18:1-24

REFLECT

I love how John paces the narrative of Simon Peter's resistance, "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear" (v18). What was Simon Peter thinking!? He was totally outnumbered! Why did he have a sword to begin with? He was a fisherman, what did he know about swordplay? His aim was clumsy! Why did he strike the high priest's servant? Why not go for the person in charge? What possible outcome did he think his actions would produce?

I've always thought Simon Peter was trying to protect his Lord. It's easy to see Peter's impulsiveness as a foolish attempt to rescue Jesus. If so, then Simon Peter clearly didn't understand why the Father had sent Jesus. He didn't grasp why Jesus had taken on flesh. Well, it wasn't for Jesus' lack of trying to explain.

But I wonder...could it be that Simon Peter becomes a swashbuckling pirate not so much to protect Jesus as to protect himself? Maybe he grasps Jesus' true identity more than we give him credit for? Maybe he does realize that Jesus has come to bear the sins of the world, to bear his sins, on the cross. Maybe Peter knows that Jesus arrested, beaten, crucified, says as much about Jesus' identity as the Lamb of God as is does about Peter's identity of a sinner in need of saving. I probably would have pulled the sword as well.

RESPOND

There is so much drama in the first part of John 18. Read the narrative a few times. Figure out how you fit in the story. Where do you want to fit in the story? Where are you really in the story?

PRAY

Jesus, as You enter this week of Your Passion, may we be present in all its complexities. Don't shield us from the pain and truth of Your death. Don't allow us to rush on to the empty tomb. Give us eyes to see the deep love of Your Father for us in the giving of You, His beloved Son. Amen.

DAY 34

SATURDAY, APRIL 4

READ

John 18:25-40

REFLECT

This passage has always been one of the most interesting for me in the entire passion narrative primarily because of those three short words at the end of verse 38, “What is truth?”

Writer and ordained Presbyterian minister, Frederick Buechner, expands on these words from Pilate in his book *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale* (a book I highly recommend if you’re looking for new “quarantine reading”). Buechner takes some creative liberties in reimagining Pilate as a chain-smoking corporate executive from the 1970s – a man whose life has little meaning apart from the family he rarely sees and his tepid friendship with his limousine driver. It’s just another day at work when he encounters this backwoods Galilean who claims a kingdom “not of this world”.

Is Pilate’s question sincere? Does he really long to know truth – could he even grasp that Truth was standing right in front of him with a split lip and a beaten brow?

RESPOND

Meditate on this question, “What is truth?”. Take some time to step into Pilate’s shoes and ask it of Jesus. Now ask it as if you were one of his disciples. Finally, ask it as yourself, right here, right now -- “Jesus, what is truth?”

One of the most difficult parts of this passage is that Jesus doesn’t answer Pilate. He is silently taken away as Pilate asks the Jewish people if they’d rather him release a common thief or Jesus. They choose the thief.

Take some time to talk to God about what this passage might be saying to you today. Ask that the Truth be revealed to you in a new way.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. When we begin to look in other places for truth and comfort, draw us back to Yourself and Your Word. In this uncertain season, remind us of Your steadfast love and power that always has the final word. Amen.



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