

VCEFC Daily Devotion
Feb 20- Feb 26, 2006

Feb 20: John 6: 60-71 To Whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Notes:

- V 60-61 Many of Jesus' disciples who have followed Him up to this point start to grumble because they find Jesus' teaching intolerable, incredible and offensive.
- v 62 The ascension to heaven probably refers to Christ's crucifixion (3.14, 12:34). Jesus will return to the Father via the cross. If the people cannot understand the meaning of the bread of life, how then can they understand the meaning of the cross?
- V. 63-66 The truth revealed by Jesus cannot be grasped from a human perspective. Only the life-giving Spirit sent by the Father can illuminate the hearts of the chosen ones to see the truth of Jesus' words and to believe them. Those who do not have a true faith in Christ will turn back eventually.
- V 67-71 According to the grammar, this question expects a negative answer, for they have been chosen by God except for one- Judas. Peter's answer echoes Jesus' earlier statement- Jesus' words are spirit and life.

Meditate: When Jesus fed the 5000 men plus a multitude of women and children, they sought to make Him king (John 6:15-16). But when Christ offered Himself as the Bread of Life, they left Him (6:60, 66). The people demanded His provision for their physical need, but they did not want His Person. They were willing to accept Christ's gifts, but were not willing to receive the Giver of the gifts. Jesus' "congregation" plummeted from 5000 to twelve in one afternoon, all because He invited them to enter into a personal relationship with Himself- but they rejected Him.

If you were one of the followers of Jesus at that time, would you leave Him? Reflect on your spiritual journey, what have drawn you to follow Jesus? His blessings or Himself? Is Christ and your relationship with Him central to all of your life- who you are and how you conduct yourself?

Feb 21: John 7: 1-13 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me.

Notes:

- V. 1-5 The ministry of Jesus is under increasing tensions: the crowd has fickle opinions about Him, the Jewish religious authority wants to kill Him, many of His disciples have abandoned Him, one of the twelve is figured as a betrayer, and even His own brothers do not believe in Him: they urge Him to attend the festival of Tabernacles and to perform more spectacular signs, so as to regain His popularity.
- The festival of Tabernacles was a weeklong feast celebrating in September or early October in memory of the forty years the Israelites spend in tents in the desert. Two of its rituals are important to note in reference to the discourses in these chapters of the Gospel. Each morning a procession made its way to the Pool of Siloam where water was drawn while a choir sang Isaiah 12:3 "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." Then the procession returned to the temple and, after marching around the altar, a priest poured the water on the altar. The ritual of drawing water represented a prayer for rain for the upcoming

growing season. At the conclusion of each day, there was an elaborate lamp-lighting ceremony in the court of the women to celebrate the pillar of fire that guided the Exodus pilgrims.

- V. 5-9 As Jesus has rejected the efforts of the people to make Him king (6:15), He now rejects His brothers' strategy for success. When Jesus talks about "the right time for me", He refers to His death, in particular His crucifixion. It will be the time when He returns to the Father (7:33), is glorified, and dispenses the Spirit (7:37-39). And the time is determined by the Father, whose will Jesus will submit.
- V. 10-13 During the feast, the Jews (the religious leaders) are searching for "that guy". The crowds with diversified opinions whispering about Jesus, some say He is a good man, others argue He is a deceiver. To label Jesus a deceiver is a serious accusation, comparable to calling Him a false prophet who should be put to death. (Deuteronomy 13:1-11)

Meditate:

1. Jesus tells His brothers that He is the object of the world's hatred. He is hated because He speaks the truth and exposes prejudice, greed, hatred and injustice. For Jesus, making a difference in the world is painful. What is the relevance for you today?
2. Do you ever wish you could have been in Jerusalem in Jesus' day experiencing His ministry first-hand? Does the dialogue between Jesus and His brothers leave you feeling that persons in close proximity to Jesus had a distinct advantage over believers today? Or, does this text suggest that the sources, grounds and risks of faith have not changed? You can see and not see, hear or not hear.

Feb 22: John 7: 14-24 If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God....

Notes:

- Opinions about Jesus abound in this passage: Some question His teaching credentials (v.15), some accuse Him of having a demon (v. 20), some wonder if the rulers know whether or not Jesus is the Christ (v 26), some claim that no one could know where the Christ comes from (v 27); others think He is a miracle-worker (v. 31), still others consider Him the Prophet, the Christ (v.40). We need revelation to see Jesus true identity - the Messiah, the Son of God.
- V 14 Halfway through the feast, Jesus comes out from secrecy to teach in public view. A series of questions and challenges are indirectly posed to Jesus by the people and the Jews.
- v 15-19 Amazement is an appropriate response to God's revelation. However, the Jewish leaders only marvel at Jesus' teaching, but they do not go beyond the amazement to discern His identity as the Father's Son. Who can discern whether the teaching is truly from God? Jesus points to the heart, especially a God-centered life (v.17). Only those who do God's will understand God's truth. In seeking to enforce Mosaic Laws concerning Sabbath breaking and blasphemy, the Jewish leaders are about to break another law: "You shall not murder." They are self-contradictory.

- v 20-24 The Sabbath Law permitted a ceremony of circumcision if a male child became eight days old on Sabbath. So if the Sabbath law is suspended to remove a small piece of flesh from one part of the body, it must not be wrong to heal a man's whole body on the Sabbath. Jesus sees Himself not simply liberalizing the law but fulfilling what the law is meant to do: to bring renewal and redemption to God's people. The Jews are so engrossed with their regulations about Sabbath keeping that they fail to see the true meaning of Jesus' action.

Meditate:

1. Why are the Jewish leaders blind to the truth? What is the key to understand Jesus' teaching?
2. How to avoid judging things by mere appearances?

Feb 23: John 7: 25-39 Whoever believes in me, streams of living water will flow from within him.

Notes:

- v. 25-30 It is widely believed that the Christ would come into the world and remain hidden until the time for His public presentation by God. Accordingly, Jesus of Nazareth is disqualified because his origins in Galilee are known prior to his public appearance. Jesus does not deny that He has an identifiable human history (the Word became flesh 1.14) , but He also asserts His unique relationship with God the Father. He further points out that the people's ignorance about His true origins is due to their ignorance about the true God. The attempt to arrest Jesus will not be successful until the Father's appointed time comes.
- v. 31-36 Israel's prophets usually have to verify their credentials as God's messengers by performing miracles. Being impressed by the miraculous signs that Jesus has performed, many believe in Him. Aware that the Jewish leaders seek to arrest Him and kill Him, Jesus reveals His coming death by telling the people that He will be leaving shortly. In fact, Jesus' crucifixion is probably about six months away. However, the people misunderstand that Jesus is about to go to where the Jews are scattered among the Greeks.(The Dispersion: refers to the large number of Jews who at that time were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.)
- v. 37-39 The seventh day of the feast of Tabernacles was the great day when the various rituals peculiar to the festival were celebrated with special emphasis. Instead of marching once around the altar with the water, the priests would circle seven times and pour water on a rock in remembrance of the provision of water through the rock during the Exodus. By inviting those who are thirsty to come to Him, Jesus is proclaiming that He is the ultimate source of living water- the Holy Spirit. (The scriptural quote may be from Zechariah 14.8, Psalm 78.15-16, 105.41; Proverbs 18.4; Ezekiel 47.1-11)

Meditate: What does Jesus' invitation mean to you? What is your response?

Feb 24: John 7: 40-52 No one ever spoke the way this man does.

Notes:

- v 40-43 Jesus' temple discourse evokes dividing opinions from the people. Some affirm Jesus as the prophet like Moses(cf. Dueteronomy 18.15, 18), other

- conclude He is the Christ. Still others object to any claim that He is the Christ because His roots are in Galilee, whereas Scripture says that Christ's home is Bethlehem (Micah 5.2). In fact, Jesus was David's son . (Matthew 1.1-18, Romans 1.3-4) born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2.1-6; Luke 2.1-11). Soon after His birth Jesus was taken to Egypt to avoid the sword of Herod, then later was reared in Nazareth of Galilee, the hometown of Joseph and Mary. Once Jesus began His ministry, He suffered the disgrace of being known as a Galilean and a Nazarene. One of His greatest sufferings was to have His true identity misunderstood. However, Jesus never once discussed His Bethlehem birth, rather, He always pointed to His divine, heavenly origin.
- V 44-52 The Jewish authority is also divided. The temple guards, being amazed by Jesus' teaching, come back empty-handed. The Pharisees argue that only ignorant people submit to His claims. However, Nicodemus(the Pharisee who visited Jesus privately) points out that condemnation of Jesus in His absence is against their law. Perhaps Nicodemus is a secret believer but, as with other rulers, will not confess his belief for fear of being expelled from the synagogue (12.42). Nevertheless, he fails to make his fellow Pharisees adhere to the law they claim to know. They argue that no prophet can be expected from Galilee. But they are wrong on two counts: (1) Jesus has been born in Bethlehem, the city of David (Luke 2.4-11), and therefore has legal claim to messiahship. (2) the Scripture do speak of the Messiah as a 'great light' arising in Galilee (See Isaiah 9.1-7, Matthew 4.13-16).

Meditate:

1. In Chapter 7, Jesus is repeatedly threatened with death or arrest (7.1, 19, 20, 25, 30, 32, 44). Why are these threats made against Jesus? What is the main problem of the people who threaten Him with death?
2. What is your personal opinion about Jesus?

Feb 25: John 8: 1-11 Who will be the first to throw a stone?

Notes:

- This passage about the adulterous woman is not included in any of the earliest manuscripts. Its first appearance in Greek manuscript is in the fifth century. It was taken into the Gospel text from an oral tradition.
- V 1-5 In fact, the Jewish leaders do not accurately cite the law of Moses, for Leviticus 20.10 says that both the adulterer and the adulteress should be stoned. Why do they only bring the woman? In their male-dominated society, all preference has been given to men, while women are treated as inferior.
- V. 6 The Jews are not testing Jesus' obedience to the law of Moses, but are testing Him to see if He will condone the stoning and thereby violate Roman law, which stipulated that all capital punishment was a Roman prerogative, not Jewish. If Jesus agrees, they can accuse Him to the Roman authorities. It is impossible to know what Jesus is writing in the dust. Most believe that He begins to write in Hebrew some verses from the law that will shape His response to the dilemma.
- V 7 Jesus' statement does not mean that this woman's accusers must be sinless or morally perfect in order to bring charges against the woman, but that the accusers must engage in self-examination before they seek to judge others.

- V. 8-9 As Jesus resumes His writing, the religious leaders begin departing one by one. John uses an imperfect verb here to build a picture of one teacher departing, who is then followed by a succession of people eventually walking away.
- V 10-11 Jesus' use of the title "woman" is not harsh, but a typical sign of respect that Jesus uses even with His mother. His final words do not imply that the woman is innocent, but reflect His sovereignty to forgive sin. Sin is not treated lightly by Jesus, but sinners are offered the opportunity to start life anew. The story's crisp ending captures the seriousness with which Jesus views sin and judgment- even the sin of those who accuse the woman- and His gracious, forgiving outlook on those who are caught in its grip.

Meditate:

1. What have you learned from Jesus' answer to the angry crowd? What should we do before we want to judge others?
2. What are the differences between Jesus' attitude toward sins and toward sinners?

Feb 26: John 8: 12-20 Jesus is the light of the world.

Notes:

- v 12 The significance of Jesus' declaration that He is the light of the world can only be appreciated against the backdrop of the rituals of the feast of Tabernacles. At the end of each day an elaborate lamp-lighting ceremony was conducted in the court of the women. Four giant lamps, containing about 65 litres of oil and with wicks made from discarded priestly robes, were lit. Jewish sources report that every area of the temple was exposed to the light of these huge lamps. With torches in hand, the people danced and sang throughout the light, commemorating God's presence with them in the pillar of fire that accompanied them during the nights of the wilderness wanderings. In this setting, then, Jesus proclaims, I am the light of the world, because He illuminates on an eternal and cosmic scale, guiding people through darkness, and in Him the light of life shines upon Jews, Samaritans and all nations.
- V 13 In Jewish courts two witnesses were required to sustain a case. (Deuteronomy 17.6, 19.15)
- V 14-18 Jesus asserts that His words and His judgment are true, not because of their inherent persuasiveness, but because of their origins- God the Father, Who is a second witness. Those who judge by worldly standards cannot understand this. Jesus does not speak on His own authority but is echoing what the Father has told Him to say.
- V. 19-20 The root problem with Jesus' opponents is that they do not know the Father. They are incapable of having true spiritual discernment because they do not know the source of all spirituality, God Himself. Without a deep knowledge of God and His love, it is impossible to recognize the Son.

Meditate: Has your heart been illuminated by the light of Jesus? Have you invited Jesus to guide you to walk in the light? What does it mean to walk in the light?