

VCEFC Daily Devotion
Feb 27- March 5, 2006

Feb 27: John 8:21-30 I am from above.

Notes:

- v 21-24 Jesus will soon return to the Father through the cross. If the people fail to accept Him as the Son of God and receive eternal life, the time of His presence among them will pass and they will die in their sin. To die with one's sin unrepented and unatoned is the supreme disaster. But "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." (Revelation 14:13). The reason why the religious leaders cannot understand Jesus is because Jesus is from above and they are from below. The former radiates light, knowledge, truth, belief and life, and the latter is full of darkness, ignorance, lies, sin and death. As the one coming from above, Jesus is not simply a prophet with divine things to communicate, or a man with religious insight, but He is the divine one, the Son of God.
- v .25-26 The words Jesus speaks reveal God's truth to the world. But for those who reject the revelation, Jesus' words become judgment to them..
- v. 27-30 The supreme moment of Jesus' self revelation is when He is "lifted up", which is not only the cross, but the series of events that lead to His final glorification: betrayal, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Through these events, the world will see that Jesus is the great "I am", the Holy one.

Meditate:

1. Are you convinced that Jesus is truly the Son of God? What is your response to His warning, that "if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."
2. How does your life show that you truly believe in Jesus as God?

Feb 28: John 8:31-38 The truth will set you free.

Notes:

- v. 31-32 Jesus challenges the Jewish religious leaders who have come to believe in Him to hold to His teachings and abandon their old beliefs. This is the only way to true discipleship because if they are not free from the bondage of their religious heritage, they will never understand the truth, and will never be free.
- v. 33 Jewish teachers used to teach that all Israelites were sons of kings because they were sons of Abraham, Issac and Jacob. Throughout their history, they insisted on the freedom to worship the God of their ancestors, even when they suffered under political oppression. So from their point of view, they have never been religious slaves.
- v. 34-38 Jesus shows them that even a descendant of Abraham can be enslaved at the spiritual level to sin. Their intention to kill Jesus proves that they do not really believe in Jesus' revelation of God's truth. They are still the slaves of sin

Meditate: True discipleship is to hold to Jesus' teaching, then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. Are you a true disciple of Jesus? How does Jesus' teaching guide your life, your action and your everyday choices? Are you free from your old beliefs and let the truth instruct you how to live? Give some examples.

March 1: John 8: 39-47 Do you belong to God?

Notes:

- v. 39-40 Jesus challenges the Jews' claim to be the children of Abraham because they do not act like Abraham. Their endeavor to kill a righteous man, and that because He speaks God's truth, is totally opposed to everything known about Abraham, whose life was marked by faith in the obedience to God's word. (Genesis 12:1-4; 22:15-18)

- v. 41 Jesus points out that the father of His Jewish opponents is not Abraham but another, as yet unnamed. To this they reply that they are not spiritual bastards but the children of God. Their language echoes that of the prophet Hosea, who had likened Israel's idolatry to spiritual harlotry and described the individual Israelites as "children of fornication". These Jews dissociate themselves from that judgment, and affirm "We have one Father, God." (Exodus 4:22)

v 42-43 Those who are children of God will recognize Jesus and love Him (1 John 5:1) . For the Jews, Jesus' language is incomprehensible because they cannot hear the revelation He brings, i.e. receive it with faith. From a "not wanting to hear" , they develop a "not able to hear", an incapability of giving a hearing to the message of Jesus. Unbelief has become an attitude to life in self-enclosure, a hardening or stubbornness.

v. 44 The conduct of the Jews shows that they are not children of God but children of the devil. They carry out what the devil wants, and that above all is to kill, for (a) he was a murderer from the beginning, (b) he is a liar, and (c) he is the father of lying. (Genesis 3). All this is the opposite of Jesus and His works, since He comes (a) to bring life to the world, (b) to reveal truth, and (c) to enable mankind to share in this reality and power. As the devil opposes the word and works of the Christ, so the Jewish opponents of Jesus are his willing instruments, in particular they are ready to contrive His death.

v. 45-47 Since Jesus speaks the truth, the Jews, prompted by the father of lies, do not believe Him. Their rejection of the truth and murderous hostility to Jesus provoke a question, "Can any one of you prove me guilty of sin?" In fact, Jesus' life and His teaching are one- He embodies in life the truth He proclaims from God. Why then do they not believe Him and listen to Him? Because they do not belong to God.

Meditate:

1. "He who belongs to God hears what God says." Do you belong to God? How do you know?
2. One will develop from a "not wanting to hear" to a "not able to hear". What kind of attitude should you have if you want to be able to hear God speaking to you?

March 2: John 8: 48-59 If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.

Notes:

- v. 48 In accusing Jesus as Samaritan and demon-possessed, the Jews imply that Jesus is a heretic outside the pure descendency of Abraham
- v 49-50 Jesus ignores the former charge and denies the latter. He honors His Father by carrying out His commission to declare the truth He has given, while the Jews dishonor Him through rejecting it. Contrary to their unbelief, the Father honors Jesus, and "He is the one who judge", and He will vindicate Jesus and condemn His unjust oppressors.
- V. 51-53 The promise of "never see death" relates to the one who "keeps" the word of Jesus, i.e. who believes it, hold on to it, carries out its demands. The

- assurance relates to life which physical death cannot extinguish, and so to the death of the spirit, the believer receives eternal life, i.e. the life for the kingdom of God, over which death has no power and which is destined for resurrection. However, the Jews misunderstand the saying as relating to physical death, and so find in it a confirmation of their charge of madness. By asking “are you greater than our father Abraham”, they intend to push Jesus one stage further to open blasphemy by an outright claim to divine status, which will justify stoning Him.
- V 54-55 Jesus is not seeking His own glory, but it is the Father who glorifies Him. God’s mode of glorifying Jesus, through self-sacrifice in shameful death, is as distant from self-glorification as heaven is from hell. It is this incomprehension of God’s ways that makes Jesus say, “You do not know Him” and to affirm, “I do know Him and I keep His word.”
 - V. 56 “My day” refers to the ministry of Jesus as the Revealer and Redeemer. Abraham, seeing the day of salvation as the day of Jesus, acknowledges that Jesus is the means to fulfilling the divine purpose for blessing the nations. His joy and gladness is in sharp contrast to the hostile response of the Jewish leaders, his descendants.
 - V. 57-59 Jesus’ statement implies His pre-existence. He is the true revelation of God, the place of the divine presence and revelation in history. However, the Jews respond to what they view as the blasphemy of Jesus with stones that lay at hand from the builders of the outer court.

Meditate:

1. What does it mean by honoring God?
2. What does the promise of Jesus that “if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death” mean to you?

March 3: John 9: 1-12 This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

Notes:

- v. 1-2 The question of the disciples is typical of the outlook of the ancient world, that the children will be punished for the sins of their parents. (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9). The possibility of a child sinning before birth was discussed by the rabbis, not in respect of a pre-existent life, but of life in the womb.
- V. 3-5 Jesus refuses to enter into the debate about the connection between sin and suffering. Instead, he teaches that the man’s condition is designed to lead to the glorification of God. This does not mean that God has caused the man’s blindness so that later He could bring glory to Himself by healing the man. Rather, Jesus shifts the focus away from a consideration of the cause of the man’s blindness to the work of healing. Giving sight is God’s work, but Jesus and His disciples also participate in the work of God. This partnership with God extends beyond the immediate disciples to include those who believe in Jesus after His crucifixion (14:12). Thus the readers of the Gospel are invited to become partners with God in His mission in the world. Even as Jesus has been sent, so He sends others.
- V. 5-7 By the sign of giving light to a man blind from birth, Jesus demonstrates Himself to be the source of light for all humankind. Saliva was regarded as having healing properties under certain circumstances. The making of clay from

the earth can be compared with the creation of man from the earth in Genesis 2:7. It is conceivable that the actions of Jesus, including the command to wash in Siloam, are signs to strengthen the blind man's faith and to assure him that he has gained sight through Jesus.

- V. 8-12 The healed man's neighbors find it difficult to believe that the man who stood among them really was their neighbor. The question of how he has received his sight is posed four times (9:10, 15, 19, 26), which indicates that something extraordinary has happened. The healed man experiences a growing recognition of Jesus' identity (v.11 Jesus; v. 17 prophet, v. 33 from God, v. 38 Lord), whereas the Pharisees persist in their ignorance. They do not know who Jesus is in spite of His wondrous act of mercy.

Meditate:

1. "But this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." How does Jesus' statement help you understand your own hardships/suffering in a new perspective?
2. How is Jesus' response to suffering different from other people, e.g. the disciples, the Pharisees?

March 4: John 9: 13-34 One thing I do know: I was blind but now I see.

Notes:

- v. 13-16 The neighbors bring the formerly blind man to their religious authority, the Pharisees, to seek for their judgment on this extraordinary healing event. The healing on the sabbath makes what was a source of amazement a source of offense, and the Pharisees are faced with a dilemma: on the one hand the miracle shows Jesus as a man accredited by God, but on the other the breach of the Sabbath shows him to be a sinner. This causes division among them.
- V. 17 The answer of the healed blindman echoes the declaration of the Samaritan woman, "He is a prophet". The Jews believe that the prophet at the end time, i.e. the Messiah, would perform miracles like those of Moses at the Exodus.
- V 19-23 With the suspicion that a miracle has not actually happened, the Jews(the religious authority) question the man's parents about their son's former condition. They willingly affirm that this man is their son and that he was born blind, but refuse to testify how he was healed because a confession of faith in Christ has serious implications for their religious and social life within the community. They do not want to risk being expelled from the synagogue. "He is of age" signifies that he has passed his thirteenth birthday and is assumed legal responsibility.
- v 24-25 The Pharisees try to force the healed blind man into giving glory to God by confessing that he has lied about what Jesus has done. However, the man fearlessly tells the truth that he knows and has experienced.
- V. 26-29 The Jews request the man to repeat his story so as to confuse him and to see if he contradicts his previous statement. The man rises to the height of irony when he asks whether the authorities want to be Jesus' disciples as they ask so many questions about Him. Their answer reveals the heart of their opposition against Jesus: they set Moses and the Law over against Jesus and His teaching; the authority of Moses is indisputable, the authority of Jesus is questionable.

- V 30-34 The remarkable thing that the man talks of is not faith, but unbelief!! That the religious leaders could be so ignorant of Jesus, so blind to the truth, and so unbelieving!! The Pharisees, being preoccupied with their rich religious knowledge, reject the man, the miracle, and the One sent by God. In doing so they reject the shining of the Light upon them, and plunge further into their darkness.

Meditate:

1. Have you ever been pressured or challenged because of your faith in Jesus? How do you deal with this kind of situations?
2. Are you amazed by the unbelief of the Pharisees? How to prevent ourselves from following their foot steps?

March 5: John 9: 35- 41 The blind will see and those who see will become blind.

Notes:

- v 35-38 The story reaches its climax when Jesus finds the man who has steadfastly refused to deny what Jesus has done for him. Jesus reveals to him His true identity: He is the Son of Man, the promised Messiah(Daniel 7). The man responds in faith and worship Him as Lord and God. Note his journey of faith: from knowing Jesus' name (9:11), to believing He is a prophet (9:17), to testifying that He is from God (9:33), to accepting Him as Lord and honoring Him as God. (9:38)
- v 39-41 The blind man's physical healing is simply a precursor of his ultimate journey from spiritual blindness to spiritual sight. By contrast, Jesus' opponents move from debate and division (9:16) to judgment (9:24), and on to excommunication of a man who wants to be Jesus' disciple (9:34). Jesus, the light of the world, brings salvation to those who are blind and know it and want to see, but at the same time brings judgment to those who do not acknowledge their blindness and reject the revelation that would lead them into light. The real sin is not physical blindness, but spiritual blindness. Jesus' gift of sight to a man born blind is a sign of the gift of sight He desires to give to all who are spiritually blind.

Meditate:

1. Reflect on your own spiritual journey. Do you have a growing relationship with Christ, and a growing desire to worship Him as your Lord and God?
2. Do you acknowledge your spiritual blindness and have a desire to see the light? If yes, what would you do?