

VCEFC Daily Devotion
March 13- March 19, 2006

March 13: John 11:45- 57 One man die for the people, rather than the whole nation perish.

Notes:

- V 45-48 The Sanhedrin was the supreme Jewish court in Jerusalem. The members of the Sanhedrin fear that a mass movement to Jesus would lead to a popular uprising. The Romans will then come and take away from them the temple and the nation. Their main concern is their own position rather than the temple and the people.
- V 49-52 Caiaphas was the high priest in Jerusalem from 18-36 A.D. His remarks, without himself knowing it, predict the death of Jesus for the salvation of the nation as well as the whole world. The idea of bringing together the scattered people of God is an Old Testament theme. Through the death of Jesus, the people of God will be drawn together from diverse nations and united in one.
- V. 53-57 The decision to kill Jesus is made in an official manner by the Jewish authority. By giving life to Lazarus, Jesus places Himself under the danger and threat of death.

Meditate:

1. Does Jesus know that raising Lazarus from death will put Himself under danger? Why does He do it?
2. Jesus gives life to us through His death. What does it mean to you?

March 14: John 12: 1-11 You will not always have me.

Notes:

- v 1-3 By anointing Jesus' feet with extremely expensive perfume (it was worth a year's salary), and wiping His feet with her hair, Mary is performing a very improper and potentially erotic act, which violates the social norm. Jewish women were not allowed to loosen their hair in public, let alone wipe a man's feet with it. But Mary's act is an expression of her humility before Jesus and respect for Him. It is a beautiful gesture of love and affection.
- v. 4-6 Judas' comments may not have seemed unusual at that time for he was the treasurer of the group. It was only after Jesus' resurrection, John came to realize the real motive of Judas: he only cared about money, not the poor. But what is more: Judas was also the one who betrayed Jesus. Note that in the Gospel of John, every reference to Judas mentions his betrayal.(6:71, 12:4, 13:2, 26-29, 18:2-3, 5)
- v. 7-8 Jesus sees Mary's act in reference to His future death. Her pouring of the ointment anticipates His burial, though Mary does not realize it.
- V. 9-11 Many come to Bethany to see Lazarus as well as Jesus, resulting in many of them going away from the Jewish leaders and believing in Jesus. The increasing popularity of Jesus makes way for His triumphant entry into the Holy city.

Meditate: Mary's act was an extravagant and timely expression of love for Jesus. Christians of every age have done extravagant things to express devotion to God. How about you? What is your "pint of pure nard" that you are willing to offer to God?

Mar 15: John 12:12-19 Your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.

Notes:

- v 12-13 The Passover celebration attracts a large number of pilgrims to Jerusalem. The enthusiastic crowd, after receiving the news that Jesus is coming to the feast, comes out to meet Jesus with branches of palm trees, which signify the nationalistic spirit of the people who are hoping for liberation from their enemies. The words they shout are based on a psalm sung by the people as a welcome to the prince of the house of David as they make their way to Jerusalem (Psalm 118:26). Hosanna is a Hebrew word that means give salvation or victory now. The crowd hails Jesus as King of Israel and looks upon Him as the answer to their nationalistic hope.
- V 14-16 Instead of entering Jerusalem on a horse, a symbol of power, Jesus rides on a young donkey, which symbolizes humility and peace. Zechariah 9:9-10 describes the joyous coming of the King-Messiah- He is righteous, gentle, bringing salvation, riding on a donkey, proclaiming peace to the nations. This understanding of the significance of Jesus' action does not come to the disciples until Jesus is "glorified", i.e. after His death and resurrection. They then come to grasp the nature of the kingship of Jesus, as He Himself has revealed it: the king of peace and salvation brought to the world the kingdom of peace and salvation through His dying and rising.
- V 17-19 The crowd and the Pharisees respond differently to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The crowd comes out to welcome Jesus because they have heard from many eye-witnesses that Jesus has raised Lazarus from death. The Pharisees, however, become increasingly disturbed and blame one another for not being able to stop the people from following Jesus.

Meditate: As the crowd wants to crown Jesus as king with power and glory, He rides on a young donkey to enter into Jerusalem. What does this tell you about the nature of God's kingdom? How does it differ from the world's kingdom?

Mar 16: John 12:20-27 The man who loves his life will lose it.....

Notes:

- V. 20-22 The Greeks are Gentiles (non-Jewish people) who find Judaism attractive and have come to participate in the Passover feast. They have an openness to God that prompts them to make their inquiries about Jesus. Their desire to see Jesus characterizes the right attitude of a seeker to approach Jesus.
- V. 23 The approaching passion of Jesus is the hour of Jesus' exaltation and glorification. In the Gospel of John, the time of Jesus' glorification usually refers to the time He is crucified. The appearance of the Greeks is crucial because it signifies that both Jews and Gentiles are included within the scope of Jesus' salvation. Through His death all people will be drawn to Him.
- V. 24-26 By comparing His own life to a seed that must die to give new life, Jesus invites His disciples to follow His foot steps by living a sacrificial life. It is to make the Kingdom of God, not our present interests in this world, our priority. Following Christ means sharing His suffering, but also sharing His glory, now

and in the future. Eternal life is a present reality through faith in Christ, but it is also a future reality for the Father will honor those who serve Christ.

- V. 27 Jesus quotes from Psalm 6 to express His struggle, which echoes His longer agonizing prayer in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32, 42). However, He immediately recognizes that the cross is the reason for the incarnation.

Meditate:

1. "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." What does this statement remind you?
2. Do you want to follow Jesus' foot steps? What does it mean to you by living a sacrificial life?

Mar 17: John 12: 28-36 Put your trust in the light while you have it.

Notes:

- V. 28-29 To glorify the Son is to glorify the Father because it is through the cross that the loving and gracious nature of God is most clearly revealed. Jesus' ministry and life of obedience have been focused on bringing glory to the Father, and the voice from the heaven is to affirm that. However, the crowd has different opinions about the voice. God's presence in the world is ambiguous and always open to interpretation.
- V. 30-33 Jesus announces that the critical moment of human history is about to come, the ruler of the world will be deposed and the Son of Man will be exalted. The humiliation of crucifixion is also the exaltation of Christ. When Jesus is physically lifted up on the cross, He will begin His ascent and return to the Father. From His exalted position with the Father, He will draw all people, both Jew and Gentile, to come to Him through faith.
- V 34-36 Instead of responding to the crowd's misunderstanding, Jesus invites them to follow Him, the light of life. It's time for them to make a decision to trust in the light or to remain walking in the darkness.

Meditate: Jesus' invitation is for the crowd, but also for you. How are you going to respond to Jesus' invitation today? It's a continuous walk with Him in the light of life, which calls for your obedience to His will in your every choice of life. Reflect on what you did in the past 24 hours, were you following the light or walking in the darkness?

Mar 18: John 12:37-43 What do you love: praise from men or praise from God?

Notes:

- V. 37- 40 John states it clearly that the unbelief of the Jews is well predicted by the prophet (Isaiah 6:10). God intends persistent unbelief to lead to decisive judgment, subsequent repentance, and ultimate deliverance.
- V 41 The prophet Isaiah probably saw Christ in his vision of the heavenly throne (Isaiah 6:1-4)
- V 42-43 The faith of the leaders lack substance because they do not confess it for the fear of excommunication and the loss of reputation: they loved the praise from men more than the praise from God. This may reflect the situation of many in the synagogues of the first century. To be a true follower of Christ, one must count honor in the sight of God of greater consequence than honor in the sight of men, and be bold enough to confess Jesus as the Christ.

Meditate: Do your friends know that you are a Christian? If you need to pay a price for confessing your faith, will you do it? Why? What is the highest price you have paid for confessing your faith thus far?

Mar 19: John 12:44-49 No one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

Notes:

- This passage serves as a summary of the teaching and ministry of Jesus through the first twelve chapters of the Gospel of John. Jesus has walked in the world for almost three years to proclaim, heal, nourish, challenge and transform people. He has even raised His close friend from the dead. Some people praise Him as the king, others condemn Him of blasphemy. Some have decided to follow Him, and others have plotted to kill Him. The forces of unbelief seem to be growing. Darkness, deceit and death threaten to conquer Him. Yet light, truth and life are still found through faith in Jesus. Jesus, the God with compassion, shouts out His final plea for the people to believe in Him. Here's an image of Jesus to remember. It's a picture of patience and persistence for the church's own mission in the world. "When it seems that there is nothing more to said, there remains one other word, the word of grace." (Craddock 1982: 96)
- V. 44-45 Jesus once again speaks about His oneness with the eternal God. Faith in Him is faith in God.
- V. 46 Jesus has come to give light and life to the dark and dying world, which is alienated from God and remains in darkness.
- V. 47-48 The word spoken by Jesus is the standard of judgment by God, the giver of the word.
- V. 49-50 God's command is eternal life. God invites us into a relationship with Him and a sharing of His life through Jesus.

Meditate:

1. What have you learned from Jesus' patience and persistence to the unbelief? What attitude should we adopt towards non-believers?
2. "The word spoken by Jesus is the standard of judgment by God." What does it remind you?