

Living Lent | Day 26

Testimonies About Jesus

Jesus said, "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true. You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.

"You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings. But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?"

John 5:30–47 RSV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

This passage in John contains a lot! I read it multiple times in preparation for writing this devotion, and each time I finished reading it I was more overwhelmed than the

last!

If we step back into the story, we find ourselves in the crowd watching as Jesus visits the pool near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem. This specific pool is said to have healing powers when the waters are “stirred.” While there, Jesus is approached by a man who has been paralyzed for years. Upon being confronted by Jesus, the man states that he desperately wants to be healed but cannot seem to be able to get into the pool in time to be healed. Jesus simply says to the man “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk”. And he does. And if this is where the story ended, there would be no problem. But also in the crowd were Jewish leaders who didn’t take to kindly to some of Jesus’ actions and believed that he was making a mockery of their laws. Long story short, the leaders confronted Jesus for working on the Sabbath as well as His claiming that he was the Son of God.

Now, confronted by the Jewish leaders, we find Jesus trying to explain to them that He is who He says he is. He talks about John the Baptist who preached that Jesus was the Son of God and how these leaders believed John for a while. He talks about the powerful works of God that are done through Him, and lastly, he tells them that while they spend much time studying the scriptures, laws and history, they still do not believe He is God’s only son.

I can easily relate to the Jewish leaders in this story. Too often I rely on “just the facts ma’am” when dealing with issues. If I can’t read about it, cross check it, and research it, then I have a hard time believing. But this is what Jesus was warning against. He cautions us not to get too wrapped up in the details and fall victim to missing the truth. It is not to say that studying and gaining insight from the Bible and its scriptures are bad. We all agree that there is much to be gained from reading and studying. But it is the personal relationship that we build with Christ that ultimately makes the difference. A relationship on this intimate level can only come through experience. Just as the adage tells us that standing in a garage does not make us a car, simply reading the Bible does not make us a believer. It takes more. It takes a deep believe that is gained by walking daily with God and trusting Him with our every step. It is only when you couple that kind of relationship with reading and studying—then you are truly putting on the Armor of God.

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ

Mark Hellman serves as the Director of Mission and Outreach at Due West United Methodist Church in Marietta, Georgia. Due West is a United Methodist congregation that is open, friendly, and most of all, centered on Jesus Christ. With Missions as a primary focus, Mark has obviously led the congregation in missional work that involves a number of groups including Children ministries. Morningstar is honored to be a benefactor of their commitment to service above self.

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