

**EVERY DAY WITH JESUS** (August 24-30)

Savor a segment of the gospel each day so that you may...

“...grow in the grace and knowledge of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ.” “II Peter 3:18)

**Devotional Hints:** Find a quiet time and place for you and your family to have your devotion. Ask the Spirit to open your heart and guide you as you read. Take your time and read the passages out loud as that, at times, may reveal details that you may have missed or not thought of before, or thought of *in that way* before.

**24 August** Please read **Luke 6:20-26** In this reading Jesus uses ‘blessed’ and ‘woe’ to contrast the spiritual condition of believers and unbelievers; he also contrasts their ‘now’ and ‘then’. What a horrible warning he gives when he says of unbelievers, “. . . you have received your consolation” etc. In other words, “The here and now and the ‘treasures’ of time are *all* you get!” Why do we need that warning? (We tend to think of immediate results, and thus think short term. We tend to desire *physical* life, comfort, happiness and pleasure here-and-now. As this is true, and it is - We tend not to be concerned about our relationship with God and/or about the eternal welfare of our souls. Thank God, God and his Son do none of those things! It is because of his concern for our spiritual and eternal welfare that God sent his Son into the world to save the world [John 3].)

For a further and more extensive study in the contrasts between these two ways of life, one with God and the other without, read Deut. 28 noting how many blessings are mentioned vs. how many curses. In today’s reading Jesus balanced 4 with 4. What is God saying to us in Deut. 28 by having a vast imbalance between the two? (He is serious about what he says. He wants to know that for those apart from God, no matter what they do and how hard they try, nothing will turn out right, they will not find fulfillment. Anyone who is wise, who cares about his/her soul, does not even want to consider having a life here in time, let alone one in eternity, that is without God.)

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, the troubles I am facing – are they here because I am being faithful to you, or are they here because you are disciplining me because I have left something or some one come in between me and you? If it is the former case, strengthen me to remain faithful to you and to bear up under the burden knowing that I am blessed. If it is the latter, open my eyes to see that, move my heart to cast off whatever is corrupting my relationship with you, and give me feet that run back to you. In your mercy do not let me be content with and settle for the here-and-now. Amen.

**25 August Luke 6:27-36** What does love look like? Movies, magazines, talk shows, experts all have their opinion. But what does *that* opinion look like when compared with *what Jesus says* here? (The love the world talks about and desires is a physical, self-centered, self-seeking kind ruled by “I’ll love you as long as you love me, are good to me, and give me what I need to advance my happiness and life.” The love God talks about is 180 degrees the opposite of that.) What does Jesus mean when he says, “and you will be sons of the Most High, . . . your Father”? (The love described in vv. 21-35a is exactly the kind of love the Father, and his Son, have shown us. When we in turn show that kind of love we are imitating our Father and Brother.)

**Prayer:** God, grant that we are and show ourselves to be truly “children of the heavenly Father”. In our love let us look like you. Where we have failed to do that, forgive us. Create in us a clean heart and renew in us a right spirit so that in all things people will see us and honor you by saying, “You’re just like your Father.” Amen.

**26 August Luke 6:37-42** What an ugly, ugly word ‘hypocrite’ is! Note well – note very well - in the entire Bible *the only person to ever use the term ‘hypocrite’ is JESUS, and when he used it he never used it behind someone’s back.* Jesus could justifiably use the term because as true God he knows a person’s heart, so he alone can judge and he alone can condemn their thoughts, motives and actions (See Pro. 17:3). What is the difference between our use of the word ‘hypocrite’ and Jesus’? (We often use it out of frustration, bitterness, hatred and anger; to judge, condemn and hurt; and, sadly, to get our own way! *In every instance* where Jesus used that term he is dealing with those whose teaching corrupts the Gospel and/or denies it. Jesus used it out of love, warning people of the horrible danger they were putting their souls in by not having their life, theology and thoughts in line with the saving truth that we are saved by Christ alone, by grace alone, by faith alone, by the Word alone. He used it to call them to repentance, for not only were they endangering their souls, but also the souls of anyone who followed them in their hypocrisy.) Note also that the Spirit uses the related words ‘hypocrisy’, ‘hypocritical’ and ‘hypocritically’ sparingly: Three times in the gospels (either by Jesus or with reference to his ability to know hearts - Mat. 23:28, Mk. 12:15, Lk. 12:1), twice by Paul (Ga. 2:13, 1 Ti. 4:2) and once by Peter (1Pe. 2:1). In each instance, again, the terms are used in reference to teaching that corrupts or denies Gospel truth and thus threatens a person’s faith or the faith of others. A related Greek

word is used six times with regard to a Christian's love, faith and wisdom; each are to be un-hypocritical (Rom. 12:6, 2Cor. 6:6, 1 Tim. 1:5, 2 Tim. 2:5, James 3:17, 1 Pet. 1:22)

So what does this say to us concerning how we should consider using these terms? (Very rarely; using them only when we know *for sure* that a person who calls himself/herself 'Christian' is knowingly acting contrary to or denying biblical truth; using them only out of love and concern for the truth. Specifically with regard to the term 'hypocrite', we are never to use it behind someone's back, and never without a Christ-like love and concern for that person and his/her soul and for the souls of others.)

**Prayer:** Oh, how quick we are to use our tongue to condemn and curse (James 3:1-12) – and that over unimportant things! Jesus, we have not learned you that way (Eph. 4:17-5:2). Forgive us for tongues that are quick to condemn and hurt; but slow to tell of you and of your love, to forgive, build up and heal. Lord, cleanse our souls and mouths. Then open our lips, that our mouth, in all things and to all people, might declare your praise. In all things let our faith, love and wisdom be un-hypocritical. Amen

**27 August Luke 6:43-45** A tree's interior is unseen, but its health is revealed by its fruit. Our souls are unseen, but our fruits (thoughts, words, actions) reveal our soul's condition, its health. So - what *does* the fruit you produce say about your soul? (When we examine our fruit, we may find that we are not as spiritually healthy as we thought and realize we need Jesus, our soul's Doctor and its greatest Friend, more than we thought.) What should we do if our fruit shows that we are in spiritual trouble or spiritually ill? (Ask yourself what's the source of the trouble. Do a self-examine of your life asking, "Whose priorities am I seeking: God's, or mine, or others'?" "Am I in line with God's commandments and will for my life?" Pray for insight and healing. Go to his Word to be fed and strengthened by it. Return to your baptism and be refreshed by God's promises and blessings in it. Partake of his Son's body and blood for forgiveness and to be strengthened in faith.)

**Prayer:** Judge of all mankind, daily assist me to assess rightly the kind of fruit I am bringing forth. I may think I am doing just great – but what does my fruit show? Where I am spiritually ill or diseased, heal me. Where spiritual rotteness has set in, prune that corruption from me. Let my soul be so at one with you that the fruit I bring forth honors you and brings blessings to those around me. Amen

**28 August Luke 6:46-49** "What do you mean we have to dig down to bedrock? Why waste the time and effort? All you want is more money. Just flatten an area, pour a two inch slab and get on with it." So many have done as they built a house, thinking "We'll do it cheap, and fast and we'll be fine." Such shoddy construction was responsible for many hundreds of deaths in China as an earthquake caused poorly built schools to collapse on students and staff. What doesn't work in physical life, doesn't work in spiritual life either. Do we get the point??? What is your spiritual life built on, what is its foundation? Will it last or will it collapse under the slightest pressure? Jesus' warning to all the wise is, "No matter the cost now, have your spiritual house's foundation solidly based on me, and build on me alone. The cost is too great, if you don't."

**Prayer:** Master Builder, how firm is my foundation? Where I have not dug deeply enough, where I am not fixed solidly on you, let me see that. Work through your Spirit so that on you, the Solid Rock, I stand, so that in storms or floods I do not lose my attachment to you and what you have gained for me by your blood. Amen.

**29 August Luke 7:1-10** As we read today we may think, "Jesus heals a centurion's servant. Nothing new here; I've heard the story before." Or have we? What is more extra-ordinary: The healing? Or a cultured man of power and prestige being concerned about his servant's well-being and then humbling himself before a poor itinerant peasant Teacher named Jesus? (To see someone healed of an illness truly is a wonder. But because arrogance, power and the upper hand all are things we sinners naturally love and crave; to see someone thinking of the welfare of a "lesser" and then saying to another "lesser", "I'm not fit for you to come into my presence," – now that is a miracle – a miracle of faith worked only by God's grace and Spirit overcoming Satan, the world and our sinful nature.)

**Prayer:** Jesus, you who came to serve, not to be served. I am ashamed of how often I have thought only of self and let pride rule my life. How often I have been 'hurt' because I was slighted (or *felt* I was) by people who did not give me the recognition and treatment I deserved. Forgive my sinful prideful foolishness. Create in me a humble heart after your own, that I may follow you my Teacher, Master, God and Savior. Released from pride, let me rejoice in the liberty that comes through humble service to you. Amen

**30 August Luke 7:11-17** Edgar Watson Howe said, “If a friend is in trouble, do not annoy him by asking if there is anything you can do. Think up something appropriate and do it.” At Nain Jesus, true Son of man, did not irritate a hurting and sorrowing ‘friend’. He thought of something appropriate to do, and as the true Son of God he did it. What hope and comfort is there here for you personally as you consider your life and the needs and troubles you face? (This same God/man is here for you, just as much as he was there for the widow. He knows and will do the appropriate thing for you.) In response let’s consider ways we, within our ability, may be of help to a ‘friend’ in his or her need, and do it.

**Prayer:** It is easy to avert our eyes from that friend in need, Lord, or to just give a quick patronizing word and walk on. Help us not to do that, but instead, do as you did. For that ‘friend’ let us stop, consider what the appropriate thing to do is (no matter how ‘hard’ it might be), then help us to do it. Help us to care. In so doing may we prove to be your brothers and sisters. Amen