

EVERY DAY WITH JESUS (August 31 – September 6)

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)*

Each day’s questions are numbered and their answers are after the prayer of the day.

August 31 Luke 7:18-35 We might wonder why John the Baptist sent some of his disciples (students/followers) to Jesus to ask him, “Are you the one who is to come?” There are many speculations, but is the answer as to “Why did John send them?” really that important? ¹ Considerably more important is Jesus’ telling how his actions testify about who he is; and then his questions and answers about who John the Baptist is. People then, and now, rejoiced to hear that they, “the least in the kingdom of God”, were greater than John. Others scoffed at that truth and “rejected the purposes of God for themselves.” This reading moves us to ask ourselves the really important questions, “Who do I say that Jesus is? Do I accept the testimony his actions give about his person? Do I accept his testimony about John and his work – both of which also tell who Jesus is? In which group am I - the ‘rejoicers’ or rejecters? Am I one who expects Jesus and his Church respond my tune, or do I humble myself to him and his will and what is best for his Church?”²

Prayer: Lord Jesus, open my eyes to see you for who you are. With the tax-collectors, let me see that by grace through faith in you, I am in the kingdom of God. Where I have rejected the testimony about your person, where I have longed to be ‘great’ in the eyes of the world, where I have desired you to be my personal puppet, forgive me. Let me ever bow down and submit to you, my Lord, my Savior, and my God. Amen.

¹No. ² Answers will vary; and we may learn we need to repent of and seek Jesus’ forgiveness for a lot more than we would like to think.

September 1 Luke 7:36-50 Does this account make you uncomfortable? It does me. There are so many around us that are “that kind of person.” Yet how many times could Jesus’ rebuke of Simon, be spoken to me? How many times have I been blind to opportunities to show common courtesy, hospitality and helpfulness to those around me, and thus failed to give loving service Jesus (“Whatever you do for the least of these, you do to me.” Mt. 25:40); while “that type” have seen those opportunities, seized them and joyfully, freely and lovingly done the very thing I failed to do (Remember the Good Samaritan?)!

Worse, by judging others as “that kind” I have shown myself to be a Simon who does not get the point. In thinking I am righteous (well mostly, anyhow), I have failed to see my need for a Savior and his forgiveness. Blind to my sin and its greatness, thinking I need to be forgiven little, I have been blind to Jesus and his greatness and have failed to appreciate the greatness of the grace and the full forgiveness that he has shown me. As a result I have loved him little.

Prayer: Jesus, you welcomed the love and touch of sinners. You accepted and appreciated their acts of kindness shown to you. Forgive me, a sinner, for not seeing myself as being in their company. As a result of my spiritual arrogance I have put myself outside that blessed company and have loved you little. Heal me so I see you for who you are and realize all that you have done for me. Then let me join “that kind” to joyfully serve others to show my love and thanks to you. Let me live a life that shows that your benediction, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” resonates though and moves every aspect of my being. Amen

September 2 Luke 8:1-3 We often think of those who are in the public eye as the ones most to be admired and we covet their ‘power’. But how often do we think about the ones behind the scenes or how important they are?¹ In today’s reading we see women with Jesus, ‘behind the scene-ers’, if you will. Were they or their role insignificant in his ministry and work?² As that is true – name such similarly significant persons and the work they do behind the scenes at St. Lucas.³

Let’s also consider this – A body has only one head. So who is sole Head of the Church? (Eph. 4:1-13) As that is true, what does that make us? (1 Cor. 12:12). As that is true what should our attitude be toward our Head and one another? (Rom, 12:3-8, Phil 2:2:1-10 – Oh, please, let us read this one, at least!)

In view of all this, we, the members of Christ’s body, dare never let satan-inspired-longing- for-power issues and/or worldly societal gender wars minimize in our eyes or minds *anyone* or his or her loving service given in and to the kingdom. Indeed God has given different roles in the church. Because God gave them, each role, no matter how ‘humble’, is important, and Christ our Head appreciates it when we faithfully carry them out. (See Mark 9:35, and Mat. 25:21, 23)

Prayer: Yahweh, ever existing One, the old country song went, “Lord, it’s hard to be humble, when you’re perfect in every way.” Sadly, all too often we think of ourselves in that way – that we are so great and wonderful that all others should be astonished at us, submit to us and proclaim our praises. And, oh the howls we raise if others don’t give us what we deserve! Thank you, Lord, infinite and incomprehensible God, Creator and ruler of all things, Holy One, for not treating us in the way we truly deserve. In response to your undeserved love toward us and for your freely saving us, may we set aside our presumptions and pride and instead loving serve one another as you have served us. Amen

¹ Not very often, nor do we think of them as important. ²Certainly not. Look at what they did that enabled Jesus and his disciples to carry out their ministry. ³Altar guild, building and grounds, janitors, cooks, gardeners, grass cutters, secretaries, financial committee, parents cleaning the school, library volunteers, tutors, nursery staff, ushers, drivers, Stephen Ministers, ChristCare leaders, volunteers of every stripe, people who drop a cake off for a funeral lunch or other meal; members of Ladies Guild, Ladies Aid, choir, handbells, instrumentalists, organist and other musicians, committees, other organizations, etc. Think also of who is seeing to it that worship services run smoothly, who takes care of Easter and Christmas decorations, and the fact that Easter breakfast and other church meals and their set up, take down, ordering, cooking, clean up, goodies just don’t just ‘happen’. We owe them each and every one of them a big, “Thank you!”

September 3 Luke 8: 4-15 One of the gifts a great preacher has, as one preacher put it, is having “the ability to turn people’s ears into eyes so they can see what he is talking about.” Jesus’ used parables to do that – he used visual events, matters, activities, etc., which we see and understand, to tell us about and help us understand spiritual truths that we cannot see. But even though he was a Master at this, what was the problem?¹ What hindered people from seeing?² At times don’t we see one (or more) of these hindering our hearing of what Jesus is showing us?³ How can we be the ‘good soil’?⁴

Prayer: Lord, open our ears and eyes so they see and hear what you are telling us. It is all too easy for us to be soils that are hard, or shallow, or over-busy with ‘more important’ things so that we despise preaching and your Word. Break our stony hearts, till up and make deep our shallow ground, root out the weeds. By your Spirit turn us into fertile soil that only produces harvests for you. Amen

¹People still could not ‘see’. ²Jesus lists three hindrances in vv 9-14. How would you put them in your own words? ³Answers will vary. ⁴Realize that as we deal with God and his Son, we are not dealing with abstracts or a set of facts, we are dealing with real living beings. Realize that as we hear his Word, we are hearing the voice of the living God. Repent of and cast away whatever is making our heart’s soil hard, or shallow, or filled with what is trivial; prayerfully seeking God’s help to do this. Return to the Word – that hammer which breaks hearts of stone (Jer. 23:29), our baptisms, going to the Lord’s Supper.

September 4 Luke 8:16-18 “Don’t hide your light.” Jesus says. Have we ever considered there are ‘lights’ we hide? Concerning those things Jesus said, “but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!” (Mat. 6: 23) It is uncomfortable to think about and realize that there may be ‘lights’ in us that we don’t want people to see or know about, that is - spiritual idolatries and adulteries, sins that we treasure, seek refuge in, etc. If we see such a ‘dark light’ in ourselves, what can we do so to get rid of it so we may have light in ourselves.¹ The light we are not to hid, but shine before all is what God has done for us, who Jesus is, what Jesus has done for us. There is no need to be ashamed of such things. Nor is living as God’s people something to be ashamed of, as Paul says, “Against such things there is no Law” (Gal. 5:23). Brothers and sisters, in and for Christ let us shine, for Jesus said:

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under the basket, but on the stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Mat.5)

Prayer: Jesus, Light of the world, shine in our hearts so that every sin is exposed and it, along with its darkness is banished from us. Where we treasure darkness, work in us, so we treasure you more. Father, let us be your lights and shine through us. Amen.

¹ Don’t hide our dark ‘light’, but confess it to God. Go back to our baptism and remember that in it we are forgiven, we were made children of God, and we were freed from our sinful nature. Partake of Lord’s Supper and remember the punishment Jesus endured in his body for us and that his blood was shed to wash away our sins. Find a faithful Christian friend we can confide in and confess that sin. Ask that person be one who will pray for and with us, lovingly hold us accountable to our repentance, remind us of who we are in Christ.

September 5 Luke 8: 19-21 What does Jesus say is the secret to being part of his family?¹ But there has to be more, I have to do more, it must cost more, it can’t be that easy! But Jesus said, “My mothers and brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.” It is as simple and profound as that! And for us sin corrupted people, it is as hard as that for satan, the world that would pull us away from God and our sinful nature work against that. So how can we be such hearers and doers of the Word?²

Prayer: O Jesus, how easy, and how hard, is it to be a part of your family! Thank you for the fact that by your creative ability, the same ability that created the heavens and the earth, I have been made new and that by your Spirit I am empower to be the hearer and doer you call for. Let me be faithful member of your family and, in so being, bring honor to you. Amen.

¹ “To hear the word of God and do it” ² In and of ourselves we cannot. It is only by God working in us and motivating us by the Gospel and with his Spirit empowering us that we are enabled to be such hearers and doers. Praise God he desires to do and joyfully does such life-giving work in us!

September 6 Luke 8:22-25 Hmmm. Let’s see. Who is the only Being who is able to rule the winds, and waves? (Ps. 89) Who set a limit for the seas and said to them, “No farther!”? (Job 38:8-11). Hmmm. As that is true, who must this Jesus be, this Man we know so well, who commands wind and waves and they obey him?¹ No wonder he says to us when we are all atwitter, “Where is your faith?”

Prayer: Lord Jesus, sometimes we think of you clinically, as simply a bunch of facts. But you are so much more than abstractions or a bunch of teachings. You are the living God and my Brother. As I go through life, facing challenges and threats to my life and soul, let me ever remember that. Let me call upon you in times of trouble confident you will hear and answer me. Let me remember that you have been tried in every way as I have so that I find help and comfort in all my trials. Let me be at peace, knowing you walk by my side. Amen

¹ Scripture provides abundant testimony that he is both true Man born in time of the virgin Mary; and that he also is true God eternally begotten of the Father.