

3 APR 5th SUNDAY OF

LENT



BIBLICAL MEDITATION 4-9 APR



READ

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:1-11)

MEDITATE

Thanks be to God! The Old Testament God wrote on tablets of stone with His finger fearful laws that made people reverent. The New Testament Lord Jesus wrote the Laws with His finger on the ground, an act of grace, mercy and forgiveness for sinners, so that those who have sinned may be saved by the Lord.

Today, God still has mercy on His people. He still gives us the opportunity to confess and repent, but we must grasp this opportunity and accept God's salvation. We must spread this Good News to others, so that more sinners will receive God's grace and forgiveness, and thus eternal life.

We should reject those rejected by God; we should forgive those forgiven by God; similarly, we should accept those accepted by God.

PRAY

Be gracious to your people, we entreat you, O Lord, that they, repenting day by day of the things that displease you, may be more and more filled with love of you and of your commandments; and, being supported by your grace in this life, may come to the full enjoyment of eternal life in your everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



READ

The nations will fear the name of the LORD, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory. For the LORD will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory. He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea. Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the LORD: "The LORD looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death." So the name of the LORD will be declared in Zion and his praise in Jerusalem when the peoples and the kingdoms assemble to worship the LORD. (Psalm 102:15-22)

MEDITATE

O Lord! Amidst the everchanging people and things, let me trust in you in all my heart and follow you in your will in everything, because 'only You' are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

PRAY

Almighty God, through the incarnate Word you have caused us to be born anew of an imperishable and eternal seed: Look with compassion upon those who are being prepared for Holy Baptism, and grant that they may be built as living stones into a spiritual temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



READ

Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. (Daniel 3:14-20)

Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, Your Majesty." He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. (Daniel 3:24-28)

MEDITATE

Brothers and sisters, are 'if it be so' and 'but if not' your beliefs? Things may not go the way as we want. God's will is even beyond our understanding. But even so, we still uphold God's sovereignty and be determined to obey and trust in Him. Behind our beliefs are our assurance in God's greatness and love. Lacking either one, we will not fully understand God. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah declared with their lives: whatever the situations, we remain loyal to God till we die. This is exactly what Jesus Christ asks for His followers: 'Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.'

Brothers and sisters, do you believe from the bottom of your heart that God is here whatever the life situation, in good times or bad? Sometimes we may not be delivered from our hardships as soon as we wish. However, in different situations, can we show and overwhelm others with our loyalty, faith and courage, so as to bring glory to God?

PRAY

Almighty God our heavenly Father, renew in us the gifts of your mercy; increase our faith, strengthen our hope, enlighten our understanding, widen our charity, and make us ready to serve you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



READ

Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death." At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?" Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds. (John 8:51-59)

MEDITATE

'Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death' (v51). The Lord seriously points out that people lose their eternal life because they refuse to turn to God. For man to be recovered in eternal life, they must first turn their minds to God. When one turns his back to God in their lives, it is impossible to turn their minds to God. Thanks be to God. By what His Son has done, whoever believes in Him receives life of His Son. Such life is a life that 'knows him and keeps his word' (v55). Those with His Son's life will turn their lives to God and recognise Him, because the Father is the origin and destination of this life. When man lives with the life of the Son, he lives in God's glory and enjoys God's abundance. All our defects no longer bound us, because the Son of God has made us truly free.

PRAY

O God, you have called us to be your children, and have promised that those who suffer with Christ will be heirs with him of your glory: Arm us with such trust in him that we may ask no rest from his demands and have no fear in his service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



READ

Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" "We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"?' If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside— what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp. Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true." And in that place many believed in Jesus. (John 10:31-42)

MEDITATE

Owing to their ignorance, people may neglect the Laws and the words of prophets, but definitely they cannot change the Laws nor witnesses of the prophets. People's lack of faith is separating themselves from God. However, faith brings man and God together, and with such connection, man sees the Son in the Father, and the Father in the Son. The Father is the origin of the Son's acts, whereas the Son is a manifestation of the Father Himself and His will.

PRAY

O Lord, you relieve our necessity out of the abundance of your great riches: Grant that we may accept with joy the salvation you bestow, and manifest it to all the world by the quality of our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



READ

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation." Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. So from that day on they plotted to take his life. (John 11:45-53)

MEDITATE

The revelation of the Kingdom depends on the entire world to accept God's sovereignty and recognise His divinity, and it is definitely not about any stipulation by religious personnel. Killing the Lord only damaged the effect of the Kingdom's revelation. It is simply a counterattack towards the Lord when the power of death was being shaken. However, before the hour of the Lord came, there was nothing they could do, so the Lord left Jerusalem and moved to Ephraim. When the hour of the Lord came, the Lord Jesus was killed by them, but it only proved that He is the Son of God indeed. It also proves that 'Surely your wrath against mankind brings you praise, and the survivors of your wrath are restrained'.

PRAY

O Lord, in your goodness you bestow abundant graces on your elect: Look with favour, we entreat you, upon those who in these Lenten days are being prepared for soldiership swearing ceremony, and grant them the help of your protection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.