**I Love to Tell the Story**

Explore every story of Jesus in this year-long devotional guide. Go at your own pace using the online archive.

**Day 71: Jesus gives tribute to John**

**Matt 11:7-19, Luke 7:24-35**

Guided reflection:

The previous text had John questioning the authenticity of Jesus being the

Messiah. That must have made Jesus reflective about his cousin John. He stops and

addresses the crowds who are comparing Jesus and John. John had strange eating habits of not drinking or eating, and they called him a demon. Jesus ate and drank with folks and they called him a glutton and a drunkard! It seemed to Jesus that the folks followed John or Him for a show....but were not interested in their lives being transformed. We sure can get distracted by our judgments, can’t we?

Guided prayer:

*“Thank you, O God, for those who have been the voices in the wilderness for me and for the Christ who shows me how to live. May my generation be willing to have ears that can hear a fresh word from you for our time in history. Amen”*

**Day 72: Jesus has harsh words for some cities**

**Matt 11:20-24, Luke 10:13-15**

Guided reflection:

Wow, Jesus was not happy with the folks of the cities listed in our text today.

What was the issue? They had seen and heard John the Baptist and had seen and heard the words and mighty acts of Jesus and they did not repent! To them it was all a side show – not an invitation to a new way of life. They missed what was right in front of them! They chose to not see that the Messiah was in their midst. Do you think God ever throws up His hands in frustration with you and me: “Yikes, I am revealing myself to them and they just don’t get it!”

Guided prayer:

*“Help me to have ears that hear and eyes that see and a heart that is open, O God.*

*Keep me “motivatable” so that when I encounter your mighty work, I see it, get it, and allow you to change my heart. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.”*

**Day 73: Jesus prayer of Thanksgiving**

**Matt 11:25-27, Luke 10:21-22**

Guided reflection:

In front of the crowds, Jesus breaks into a prayer of thanksgiving. And for what is he thankful? That it is the innocent, the least in the rank of honor, to whom the secrets of God are revealed. It does not take seminary training or an appointment as a leader of the church to be open to the things of God. Just an innocent, childlike openness unlocks the keys to the mystery of God.

Guided prayer:

*“Soften my heart, O God, so that I have the faith and openness of a child. My*

*cynicism and judgments encourage me to scoff and dismiss your love for me. Forgive me, dear Lord. Amen”*

**Day 74 : Comfort for the exhausted**

**Matt 11: 28-30**

Guided reflection:

Put you name on the blank line, and read how THE MESSAGE states this

passage and listen to Jesus speak directly to your soul: “ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me, and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it! Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” Read it once like a buddy asking you to join him, then read it in a whisper as an invitation, then imagine looking at Jesus, face to face, and look him in the eye and hear his invitation again. What would it take for you to respond to Christ’s invitation?

Guided prayer:

*“Oh, how I get tired and worn out from all the “doing good” and all the*

*things I think I ought to do. Sometimes I feel that walking the Christian way can be exhausting. O God, help me experience the unforced rhythms of grace. Show me where I am trying too hard… show me what grace looks like for me. Amen”*

**Day 75: The Pharisees go after Jesus… again!**

**Matt. 12:1-8, Mark 2:23-28, Luke 6:1-5**

Guided reflection:

 Jesus and the disciples were hungry and it was the custom to walk through a field and pluck

off some grain. The Pharisees caught them. It was the Sabbath, and good Jews did not “work” on the Sabbath and plucking grain was considered work! From the outside looking in, it seems silly. But let me tell you, when someone is in a judgmental mood, what they point out as unacceptable is huge to them! I went to a workshop once that said that it was our job to be “Pharisee busters”… because folks with judgmental spirits want to force people into THEIR mold, they want rules to make people do what they think is right. Jesus was a Pharisee buster. The next time you hear yourself say “I cannot believe she calls herself a Christian…”; or “Who does he think he is trying to get away with…”; catch yourself… you might be setting yourself up as a Pharisee! Busted!

Guided prayer:

*“O God, sometimes I act like a Pharisee! Sometimes I enter into conversations that sound a lot like a Pharisee. Help me guard my tongue and my heart... Teach me a thing or two about grace. Forgive me. Amen.”*