

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL MARCH 23, 2015

Written by Brian Lays SYI '06, senior MDiv student, and brought to you by the **Miller Summer Youth Institute** at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

SCRIPTURE

Today we depart from the Daily Lectionary and explore 2 Corinthians 2.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:10

“For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

DEVOTIONAL

Many people tend to think about life in terms of categories. It helps us make good decisions, plan for the future, and make sense of the world around us. Yet, when it comes to understanding the depths of God, the weight of mystery blurs our categories, and we reach a dead end. The most weighty moments of our lives—disappointments, losses, transitions—defy our neat and clean understanding.

There is no better example of an event that defies our categories than the cross of Christ! Jesus’ journey toward Good Friday is “good” in that it is “for us and our salvation,” yet “bad” in that it is tragic, violent, and filled with despair. The cross is a “strength” in that it is the culmination of God’s plan for our salvation, yet it exhibits the depth of “weakness” God was willing to adopt on our behalf.

The cross forces us to hold together conflicting perceptions of reality: joy and sorrow, peace and fear, immanence and transcendence. Paradox is essential to our understanding of God and God’s work in our lives. It allows us to think in “both/and” categories rather than only “either/or” categories. The Lenten journey is one of paradox. Rather than thinking about Lent as a time of happiness or sadness, perhaps the two can be held together in a kind of “bright sadness,” to borrow a term from Richard Rohr. Such thinking allows more room for mystery in our thoughts as we ponder the old rugged cross.

PRAYER

Lord, the depths of your work for us go beyond our capacity to understand. Yet, let us rest in and drink deeply from the flow of your grace in all that we do. Amen.

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