

LENT DEVOTIONAL MARCH 23, 2017

Fr. Eric McIntosh '12, Priest, St. James Episcopal Church, Penn Hills, Pa.

SCRIPTURE

JEREMIAH 10:11-24

11 Thus shall you say to them: The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.

12 It is he who made the earth by his power,
who established the world by his wisdom,
and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.

13 When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens,
and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth.
He makes lightnings for the rain,
and he brings out the wind from his storehouses.

14 Everyone is stupid and without knowledge;
goldsmiths are all put to shame by their idols;
for their images are false,
and there is no breath in them.

15 They are worthless, a work of delusion;
at the time of their punishment they shall perish.

16 Not like these is the LORD, the portion of Jacob,
for he is the one who formed all things,
and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance;
the LORD of hosts is his name.

17 Gather up your bundle from the ground,
O you who live under siege!

18 For thus says the LORD:
I am going to sling out the inhabitants of the land
at this time,
and I will bring distress on them,
so that they shall feel it.

19 Woe is me because of my hurt!
My wound is severe.
But I said, "Truly this is my punishment,
and I must bear it."

20 My tent is destroyed,
and all my cords are broken;
my children have gone from me,
and they are no more;
there is no one to spread my tent again,
and to set up my curtains.

- 21 For the shepherds are stupid,
and do not inquire of the LORD;
therefore they have not prospered,
and all their flock is scattered.
- 22 Hear, a noise! Listen, it is coming —
a great commotion from the land of the north
to make the cities of Judah a desolation,
lair of jackals.
- 23 I know, O LORD, that the way of human beings is not in their control,
that mortals as they walk cannot direct their steps.
- 24 Correct me, O LORD, but in just measure;
not in your anger, or you will bring me to nothing.

DEVOTIONAL

I read this passage and all I have are questions for us today. I wonder, Who are today's "goldsmiths" put to shame by their idols? Who are today's "stupid shepherds" who do not "inquire of the LORD" and whose "flocks," therefore, "have not prospered" but instead have "scattered"? What today might be the "great commotion" coming from the "land of the north" to bring desolation on those who have forsaken the God who "made the earth by his power" and "established the world by his wisdom"? I perceive that desolation is an equal-opportunity affliction.

If I ask these questions about the world around me—and I do want to ask them—I then must wonder whether that world might be asking these questions about me! As I look at America, I am awake to the fact that America cannot claim she knows God. Can we who live within her borders claim to know God if we keep silent to that which angers God?

Do I know you God? I do know that I should not fear man, political elections, the new administration, or rising racial tension. But I should fear you, Lord! I should fear seeing this prophecy of old be answered on us—and that fear should move me to actions that do not anger but instead honor you.

PRAYER

Oh Lord, God of "another chance," have we run out of ours? Are you sending a "great commotion" on us as a nation? Correct us, Lord, "but in just measure, not in your anger." Bring us to full repentance, not "to nothing." We beg you, turn us to you and do not turn away. Lord hear our prayer!

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Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
616 North Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Phone: 412-362-5610



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