

December 13

This year's advent devotionals will feature readings from publications by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary faculty members. Today's reading comes from the book *The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus* written by Dale Allison. Allison is the Errett M. Grable Professor of New Testament Exegesis and Early Christianity at PTS. The book is published by Eerdmans Publishing Company and is available through Cokesbury.com.

The reading begins on page 105:

“God does not, in the Jesus tradition, exploit human beings but relates to them in ways analogous to how a loving parent deals with a child. Instead of repressive dominion, there is care and nurture. Mark 10:24-43 censures pagan kings with these words: ‘You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant.’ Rejection of oppressive lordship also appears in Mark 10:45, where the Son of man, a royal figure in the Gospels, comes not to be served but to serve (likely an ironic reversal of Dan. 7:13-14, where peoples ‘serve’ the ‘one like a son of man’). The same sacrificial spirit animates the stories of Jesus approaching the city of Jerusalem. When the Son of David makes his royal entrance, he rides humbly on a donkey instead of a war horse. He has not in any conventional sense overpowered anybody or anything, nor is he about to do so. Like the God he represents, he is not that sort of ruler. This is no conquering king but the author of the beatitudes. We understand why Matthew has Jesus decline the assistance of militant angels and declare that those who take the sword will perish by the sword (Matt. 26:52-53). The politics of heaven are not the politics of earth.

Prayer

Oh Holy God, you challenge us to practice a different way of life. You call us not to power or might, but rather to humility, love, and service. This is not an easy calling. In this season, enter our lives and our hearts once again, that we might live according to your purposes and all that works for your peace. Through Christ we pray. Amen.