

December 16

This year's advent devotionals feature readings from publications by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary faculty members. Today's reading comes from the book *Journey through the Word: Exploring Biblical Themes*. It is written by James Davison and Sara Covin Juengst. Davison is the Director of Continuing Education at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. It is published by Westminster John Knox Press and is available through Cokesbury.com.

The reading begins on page 19:

It is not easy to speak of hope in today's world. Our minds are filled with pictures of terrorism, starvation, violence, and the threat of nuclear war. Our lives so quickly become pits of depression and frustration and emptiness. When everything seems to be working against us and against the values in which we believe, it is easy to turn aside from the covenant demands, as the Israelites did, or to turn them into burdensome yokes of legalism in a desperate search for security.

But we are a covenant people. And we have a covenant God. And God's promise to us is that in spite of our sin and disobedience and discouragement the covenant stands firm. Because of God's real love for us, written in blazing letters not on tablets of stone but in our hearts, we have hope (see Jer. 31:31-34). And because we have hope, we rejoice in the covenant promises as did the psalmist.

Prayer

Our prayer for today is the one referenced in this reading, found in Psalm 111:

“The Lord is gracious and merciful.  
He provides food for those who fear him;  
    He is ever mindful of his covenant.  
The works of his hands are faithful and just;  
    All his precepts are trustworthy.  
They are established forever and ever,  
    To be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.  
He sent redemption to his people;  
    He has commanded his covenant forever.”  
This is the word of the Lord. Amen.