

This year's advent devotionals feature readings from publications by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary faculty members. Today's reading comes from the book *Why Scripture Matters*, written by John Burgess, James Henry Snowden Professor of Systematic Theology and published by Westminster John Knox Press. For information on ordering the book, visit Cokesbury.com.

The reading is found on page 96:

Scripture's compelling power is not primarily a matter of ecstatic experience. It does not require us to relinquish our critical faculties. If Scripture is indeed best understood as commentary on the risen Christ, then we will wish to investigate the social and historical conditions that both shaped and limited human response to God, as recorded in Scripture. Careful historical-critical work can save us from our innate tendency to read Scripture in ways that too conveniently ensure our own privilege and comfort.

But Scripture will ultimately matter to us not because we have successfully investigated the biblical authors of the tradition's great commentators, but because we have discovered its compelling power for ourselves. The answer to our doubts about Scripture as a sacramental word is finally a trust that God alone gives, but to which the community of faith invites us every time it gathers for worship. It is in worship that the community of faith testifies to the trustworthiness of these texts. Worship is the most profound commentary on Scripture, and other forms of commentary will ultimately find their focus there.

Prayer

Holy God, we rejoice that you come to us through your Word in Scripture, and through the Word, Jesus Christ. In this advent season, help us to read, hear, and see with open hearts, eyes, and ears. Fill us with a receptive watchfulness as we worship you.

Amen.