

Lenten Devotional March 5, 2021

Scripture

John 5:30-47

30 "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me. 31 If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. 32 There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true. 33 You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. 34 Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. 36 But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. 37 And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, 38 and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent. 39 You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. 40 Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. 41 I do not accept glory from human beings. 42 But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. 43 I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. 44 How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? 45 Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. 46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. 47 But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?"

Devotional

Lynn Cox '14

What patience God has with our unbelief! Jesus has healed a sick man physically and spiritually and been repaid with persecution from a group of Jews. Blind to the grace and mercy we readily see in Jesus' acts toward the man, they have called Jesus to account for performing work forbidden on the sabbath. We enter the middle of Jesus' response to their accusations confident that we side with him and anticipating his delivery of a theological *coup de grace*.

Thank God, that is not what Jesus does. Instead, he affirms that he has no power of his own. Like them, he must seek the will of God to be empowered. In a subsequent debate (John 8:14-16), Jesus will claim that he can testify rightly to his own actions, but here he submits to the human standard that requires the testimony of others. He reminds his accusers of the witnesses that testify to them about his identity: God his Father, John the Baptist, the works the Father has assigned to him, the Scriptures, and the law of Moses. Submission to God in love and faith are all that is necessary for them to recognize the truth of their testimony.

Jesus' word to his opponents is also a word to us. We may hear it echoed in the directive to believers in James 1:5-7. God gives wisdom—the ability to recognize and respond to God's truth—generously and without hesitation to those who ask for it in faith. When, like Jesus' accusers, our study, prayer, and worship are shaped more by our devices and desires than by the love of God, we must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

This word to everyone who claims a relationship with the Father is both hard and full of grace. God does not hesitate to call out whatever constitutes our doublemindedness, but in Christ he simultaneously invites us into loving relationship, thus proactively making his will and way available to us by faith through the Scriptures, the testimony of the saints, the fellowship of believers, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Lent grants us time and space to see where we stand in response to God's invitation.

Prayer

Thank you, Father, that in love you have revealed yourself to us in Jesus and invite us to know you more and more by faith. Match our desire to know you and do your will to your desire for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.