

Lenten Devotional April 6, 2022

Scripture

2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6

14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; 16 to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.

1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we? 2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; 3 and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. 4 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, 6 who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Devotional

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In the book *God the Spirit*, Michael Welker describes the Holy Spirit as a “force field” of love. In using this language, Welker understands the Spirit as analogous to a gravitational field. Like gravity, God’s Spirit is a force operating between, around, and through us. But we can use the term ‘field’ to describe relational realities and not only forces acting on objects. A decade ago, James Fowler and Nicholas Christakis argued in their book *Connected* for a much more social understanding of human behavior than previously understood. Our social networks, they insist, shape our attitudes, habits, and emotional well-being. We exist in emotional and relational fields—social realities created by, in, and through our shared life.

God, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit, “spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing God” in and through those found in Christ. “For we are the aroma of Christ,” Paul says (referring to his apostolic ministry) and “you are a letter of Christ . . . written . . . with the Spirit of the living God.” Thanks be to God, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a social reality among us, a field, an aroma, a love letter written by the Spirit through our shared life. Let us recognize and not resist this force field of love that is the Holy Spirit.

Prayer (Psalm 5)

1 Give ear to my words, O LORD;
give heed to my sighing.

2 Listen to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.

3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.

4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil will not sojourn with you.

5 The boastful will not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.

6 You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful.

7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,
will enter your house,
I will bow down toward your holy temple
in awe of you.

8 Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness
because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.

9 For there is no truth in their mouths;
their hearts are destruction;
their throats are open graves;
they flatter with their tongues.

10 Make them bear their guilt, O God;
let them fall by their own counsels;
because of their many transgressions cast them out,
for they have rebelled against you.

11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them,
so that those who love your name may exult in you.

12 For you bless the righteous, O LORD;
you cover them with favor as with a shield.