

Lenten Devotional March 9, 2023

Scripture

John 5:19-29

19 Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. 20 The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. 21 Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. 22 The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. 24 Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. 25 "Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; 27 and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and will come out -- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

Devotional

The Rev. Anthony R. C. Hita '13

If five random non-believers in your social circle were asked what top three things define you, would "Christian" make the list? Our identity in Christ is besieged, not from outsiders, but from our very selves. We let our jobs, nation, politics, sports teams, and hobbies define us first, giving Christ only the leftovers. During the Church's early years, "Christian" was a pejorative. In the Roman system, society was organized around the rituals of the Greco-Roman gods. By following Jesus, Christians became outcasts from the social network surrounding the temple cults. To be called "Christian" was to be called a cultural traitor, as by not participating in the dominant religion, people worried Christians would bring the wrath of the gods on everyone. Christians were identified as atheists ("denier of the gods"), a status having intense stigma attached to it. New Christians in this environment converted not because Christianity was attractive, but because they saw how Christians lived, heard how Christians talked, and realized Jesus was worth following as a result.

Accepting Jesus Christ is not merely an intellectual assent to some philosophical truth—it is a completely new primary identity. The point of being a Christian is to so closely identify with Christ that you are always introducing others to Jesus in both your actions and words. When Christians act, speak, or treat others contrary to how Jesus behaved, we corrupt our identity and introduce others to a false Christ. To lead to Christ, we must lead *with* Christ.

Prayer

Lord, help me to decrease that you might increase; that acting or speaking, others might see you more and me less. Take first place in my life and let me use my unique individuality to more fully serve you so that others too may participate in the bounty you have given and promised all those who claim your name. Amen.