

Lenten Devotional March 20, 2023

Scripture

Romans 7:1-12

1 Do you not know, brothers and sisters — for I am speaking to those who know the law — that the law is binding on a person only during that person’s lifetime? 2 Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. 3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

4 In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

7 What then should we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” 8 But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived 10 and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. 11 For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

Devotional

The Rev. Andy Greenhow, Chief of Staff and Secretary to the Board of Directors

You’re reading this in March but I am writing this over the Christmas holiday, and my 6-year old niece Emilia has just asked me for the 75th time if I’m done with my homework so we can play yet. To whatever extent any strategy has bought me time, it has been directing her to do a specific task in a specific manner: “Go to the door, twirl three times, meow like a cat, and then come back on tiptoes.” Simply saying, “I cannot play right now but I will be able to play at some point soon” is too ambiguous. It’s not a S.M.A.R.T. goal, and sometimes we need specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely goals.

So yes, it is good news that we are dead to the law, and the freedom we have in Christ is extraordinary. But I have to say that freedom can feel a little too ambiguous sometimes, especially when waiting. For me, the gift of a Lenten observance is a chance to reconnect with the specificity of the law and my specific responses to it. It invites me into structure, order, and a way to await what is coming. It may be easier for me than it is for Emilia because I know where this journey ends: the cross, the empty tomb, and the right hand of the Father. But as I walk toward all those things, one step at a time, I am grateful for the gift of the law and the company of the rules.

Prayer

Liberating God, we know of the freedom we have in your son’s life, death, and resurrection and yet we do not always know what to do with that. Guide us this Lenten season as we renew our commitment to you. Amen.