

Lenten Devotional March 9, 2024

Scripture

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

1 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

6 Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. 7 Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." 8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. 9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. 10 And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. 13 No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

Devotion

The Rev. Joshua Fisher '14

In my work as a pastor and chaplain at Allegheny County Jail I have had the honor of holding holy space for others to confess their pain and mistakes. It rarely comes out in a formal confession, like the liturgies we use in worship. Rather, it comes with a hanging head or strained laughter, and sometimes, through bitter tears. It is not uncommon to hear someone say at the Jail that the bitterness that keeps them up at night is that they have committed the same sins as their ancestors. They promised themselves that they would not end up like them. Not them, not like their deadbeat dad, or their drug-sick mom. They are looking into the mirror of life and are having the courage to confess and bring to the light what many bury in the dark of their denial. Sometimes, I wish that we all had the courage to confess these deep wounds and failures. In these moments, I often think of the old monk adage attributed to Abba Moses: "Go to your cell and your cell will teach you everything."

The Apostle Paul encourages the church of Corinth to be looking in their own mirrors. In this reminder though, he is abundantly clear that it is not their faithfulness that will redeem them. It is God's faithfulness. It is God's faithfulness. Yes, this is redundant; it is God's faithfulness that will provide no matter what they face. How do they know? They look to the ancestors and they will see God's faithfulness. They look to the Christ who revealed God's love to both Jew and Gentile. In Lent, we focus on repenting of our sins and opening space to God's love. As you look in your own mirror this Lent and if you see some things you do not like, remember: God is faithful. The love of God is greater than our failures. It was true yesterday, it is true today, and it will be true tomorrow.

Prayer

God of Moses who murdered, God of Jacob who lied, God of Rahab who prostituted, come into our hearts this day and deliver us from the judge and accuser. Remind us that there is nothing greater than your love or power to heal our wounds. And give us the grace to hold this for others as we need it for ourselves. To the glory of God and in the power of Christ we pray, Amen.