

Lenten Devotional March 20, 2024

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.

Devotion

The Rev. Chad Bogdewic '10/'13

For years, I have been involved in the United Methodist Church's disability ministry in Western Pennsylvania; it is something that I have always felt called to. One of the fundraisers the Disability Concerns Committee has is through its t-shirt sales. One of our most popular has "Who Do You See?" on the front and "Who Does God See?" on the back. We are called to see the image of Christ in others, but we are also called to live out the message of Christ through not only our words, but our actions as well.

In the passage, Paul writes, "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all." This imagery is reminiscent of Jeremiah, who said, "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer 31:31, 33).

Living out our faith in humility is the highest form of praise. It is so much easier to live for ourselves, but that does nothing for society or for the message of the Gospel. To truly live is to die to self—meaning, I believe, to die to our selfishness, self-interest, and if we are being honest, our self-hatred. This, I believe, starts with loving self. If we do not love ourselves, how can we love others as ourselves? And if we cannot love others, whom we see, how can we love God whom we don't see (1 John 4:20)? We can show the world the message of Jesus Christ by sharing the message that is written on our hearts by showing them that they are worthy of God's love. Because if I am worthy, then they certainly are as well.

Prayer

Living and Loving Incarnate One, you have shown us how to live and how to love. You have written your message on our hearts. May we share that message by showing our hearts to others through incarnational living and loving. In your name, Lord Jesus, we pray, Amen.