

Advent Devotional December 17, 2020

Scripture

2 Peter 2:10b–16

10b Bold and willful, they are not afraid to slander the glorious ones, 11 whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not bring against them a slanderous judgment from the Lord. 12 These people, however, are like irrational animals, mere creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed. They slander what they do not understand, and when those creatures are destroyed, they also will be destroyed, 13 suffering the penalty for doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their dissipation while they feast with you. 14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! 15 They have left the straight road and have gone astray, following the road of Balaam son of Bosor, who loved the wages of doing wrong, 16 but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

Devotional

Robert Jones '14

John the Baptist is one of the central characters in the Advent drama. His proclamation in the wilderness reminds us that preparing ourselves for Christ's coming involves repentance. Today's reading from 2 Peter is troubling. It is directed toward opponents of the church and contains some rather harsh rhetoric. But as I spent time reflecting on its significance, I was struck by a line in verse 12: "They slander what they do not understand." Does this line resonate with you the way it resonates with me?

So much of the conflict in our church, in our country, and in our world appears to be rooted in an impulse to slander what we do not understand. And if I am honest, this impulse exists in my own heart as well. The work of understanding is hard, and it can often unsettle and disturb our comfortable view of reality—even our comfortable view of ourselves.

This Advent, let us take seriously the call of John the Baptist to repent. Let us identify those ways we have slandered what we do not understand. Understanding can be uncomfortable, even painful. Slandering what we do not understand can function as a defense mechanism. It can allow us to preserve our comfortable view of ourselves, of the world, and of our place in it. But Jesus does not call us to self-preservation. Jesus calls us to understanding. And to repentance.

Prayer

Gracious God, you have called us to this season of preparation and repentance. Give us the courage to seek understanding, even when doing so is uncomfortable and painful. Help us to be committed more to the truth than to our comfortable view of ourselves. In Jesus' name, amen.