

Advent Devotional December 4, 2023

Scripture

2 Peter 1:1-11

1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

3 His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature. 5 For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. 8 For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For anyone who lacks these things is nearsighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins. 10 Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. 11 For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.

Devotion

Mark Russell, Research and Instruction Librarian

In this passage, the author of Second Peter encourages the letter's audience to stay on the path towards the kingdom of God and resist the corruption of worldly lust. To accomplish this, the author extols the letter's audience to have faith, and to support that faith with other virtues, like goodness, knowledge, and self-control. This effort is portrayed as a chain in which each virtue supports the previous one listed, like goodness with knowledge and knowledge with self-control.

Reading about this chain of virtues in Second Peter reminds me of a commercial that I saw a few years ago. The protagonist in the commercial has a choice between a healthy snack and a snack with no nutritional value. The decision to eat the healthy snack inspires a series of other decisions throughout the day, including going for a walk over watching television, and passing on fast food in favor of a healthy meal. As the author of Second Peter would say, a healthy diet supports exercise, and exercise supports wellness.

Both the commercial and the passage from Second Peter show how an individual can harness the inspiration and momentum from one good choice to make another, but there is an additional, essential element that neither makes explicit. We need teachers, ministers, and parents to illuminate the path to a virtuous life, and friends, family, and co-workers to encourage us in our journey to well-being. The current tag line on the PTS web page is "Grounded in faith, formed in community," and one cannot underestimate the importance of the latter half of that statement. On the other side, our personal

choices effect our communities and our growth as individuals can only benefit those around us. As we begin this season of hope and anticipation, it seems right to acknowledge our interdependence, for we can only arrive at a better world together.

Prayer

God of hope, we give thanks for the many blessings that aid us on our path to the kingdom. As each step in the right direction supports the next, guide our hearts to help our neighbors as they take steps of their own. Amen.