

Lenten Devotional February 23, 2018

Scripture

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

¹⁶Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. ¹⁸Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." ²¹So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, ²²whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, ²³and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

Devotional

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Self-awareness is empowering. This is the lesson the Apostle put before the church at Corinth: Do you not know who you are? The Corinthians are holy, set apart. The point? God is with you and for you. To press this point, Paul makes several lofty claims: "You are God's temple . . . God's Spirit dwells in you . . . You belong to Christ . . . All things are yours." Self-awareness, in this case, meant freedom from attempts to impose identity, priorities, and strategies contrary to God's mission. It's freedom to resist. To be different. Why? God is with you.

Self-awareness is empowering, but it's also dangerous. Because self-deception is easy. Rather than resisting cultural markers of success that separate winners from losers, the Corinthians embraced them. They confused them with God's power. Similar opportunities for self-deception abound today. "All things are yours"—God is with you—quickly becomes license to seize the levers of political advantage, grasp after wealth and prestige, boast at another's expense. We trade security in God's presence for the insecurity of needing to prove God's presence with us by winning.

Making ourselves great seems prudent enough, but it's not the gospel. In Christ, God's power is revealed in setting aside glory, defying expectations. The gospel surprises. It subverts. God doesn't conform to business as usual. Neither should we. Do not be deceived. In the face of injustice perpetuated by insecurity, resistance requires self-awareness, even self-denial. Dare to defy expectations. How? God is with us, we belong to Christ, God's Spirit dwells in us.

Prayer

Gracious God, when our eyes—and the eyes of our hearts—deceive us, show us the futility of securing ourselves by ensuring we always side with the winners. Teach us to resist false power, to live differently as those confident in the promise that Christ has sided with us. Amen.