

Lenten Devotional February 28, 2018

Scripture

Genesis 42:18-28

¹⁸On the third day Joseph said to them, “Do this and you will live, for I fear God: ¹⁹if you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here where you are imprisoned. The rest of you shall go and carry grain for the famine of your households, ²⁰and bring your youngest brother to me. Thus your words will be verified, and you shall not die.” And they agreed to do so. ²¹They said to one another, “Alas, we are paying the penalty for what we did to our brother; we saw his anguish when he pleaded with us, but we would not listen. That is why this anguish has come upon us.” ²²Then Reuben answered them, “Did I not tell you not to wrong the boy? But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood.” ²³They did not know that Joseph understood them, since he spoke with them through an interpreter. ²⁴He turned away from them and wept; then he returned and spoke to them. And he picked out Simeon and had him bound before their eyes. ²⁵Joseph then gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to return every man’s money to his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. This was done for them. ²⁶They loaded their donkeys with their grain, and departed. ²⁷When one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money at the top of the sack. ²⁸He said to his brothers, “My money has been put back; here it is in my sack!” At this they lost heart and turned trembling to one another, saying, “What is this that God has done to us?”

Devotional

The Rev. Kendra Buckwalter Smith '12/'13, Director of the Worship Program

During Lent, we remember that the way of the cross, the way to resurrection, is through death. New life requires a daily surrendering of the old life, a letting go of the present order, so that we may embrace the new humanity. When Joseph saw and heard the brothers who had sold him into slavery, he wept. The weight of it all must have been overwhelming. Moving forward, embracing a new way of living, required Joseph to lay to rest the hurt of his brothers’ hatred, the bitterness and resentment over what they had done to him, the longing for the family life that could have been, the pride of having been elevated to a place of power over those from whom he might be tempted to seek revenge. And so he wept.

Sometimes, all we feel we can do is weep. As Jesus wept over Jerusalem, we weep for our own circumstances and for our weary world. When the weight of everything overwhelms us, perhaps all we can do is join our voices with Jesus’ from the cross in crying out, “Father, forgive them.” Perhaps all we can do is tell God that the weight is too heavy for us, the brokenness of this world too powerful, the pain put upon us too unforgivable. Perhaps all we can do is weep under its weight . . . and then remember that, even now, it is all at the foot of the cross and being pieced back to wholeness through the sacrificed body of Christ—it is being redeemed by the blood of Jesus shed for the forgiveness even of those sins that are too painful for us ourselves to forgive.

Prayer

Eternal God, forgive us where we have failed to seek reconciliation, where we have sought revenge rather than reunion. By the power of your Spirit, help us to weep for all that breaks your heart. Then, as we trust in your forgiveness and reconciling work, give us the grace to lay to rest the old and live in the newness of life you have brought. Amen.