

## Lenten Devotional March 5, 2018

### Scripture

#### 1 Corinthians 7: 25-31

<sup>25</sup>Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. <sup>26</sup>I think that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are. <sup>27</sup>Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. <sup>28</sup>But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a virgin marries, she does not sin. Yet those who marry will experience distress in this life, and I would spare you that. <sup>29</sup>I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, <sup>30</sup>and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, <sup>31</sup>and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

### Devotional

#### The Rev. Dr. R. Drew Smith, Professor of Urban Ministry

This passage's focus on eschewing spiritual distractions and social entanglements (including those that may accompany marriage) is perhaps a bit discomfiting to most who encounter it. We may shield ourselves perhaps from the passage's sacrificial demands by rationalizing that it applies only to a selected group of Christians uniquely called to lives of heightened spiritual discipline, self-denial, and service. This group could include, for example, persons devoted to religious sisterhood and monastic priesthood traditions. But confining the passage's applications only to persons who ecclesially (or less formally) devote themselves to this kind of ascetic living would obviate what the passage portends about spiritually consecrated living and service in a broader sense.

Although the scriptures often reference the "few" versus the "many" (as in "many are called, few are chosen" [Matthew 22:14]), such distinctions do not necessarily apply to this passage in 1 Corinthians. It is not simply the few whom the passage beckons into deeper spirituality and service through consecration and sacrifice—it is the many, irrespective of social status or station, profession or livelihood, family structure or marital status.

There is a selflessness written into this passage, but also an urgency—both of which are quite pertinent to the Lenten season. Through crucifixion, Christ "laid down" His life in an act of supreme selflessness to rescue a perishing humanity. As Christ demonstrated so clearly through His life and death, it is in losing ourselves that we find ourselves, it is through emptying ourselves that we become full, and it is through sacrificing ourselves in behalf of others that we show our love for each other and for God (Matthew 10:39; Philippians 2:7; John 15:13). In recalling the meaning of Christ's sacrifice, let us also assess how much of ourselves we are giving to God and to a world of people in peril.

### Prayer

Lord God, in a world preoccupied with self, may we be so giving to others and so surrendered to you that we hold nothing back. Let your words, your ways, your will be entirely ours. Let us seek you with our whole heart, and let us draw nearer to you through our service to others. Take our lives and consecrate them to you and to the service of your people.