

Lenten Devotional March 7, 2018

Scripture

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

¹Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ²Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; ³but anyone who loves God is known by him. ⁴Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “no idol in the world really exists,” and that “there is no God but one.” ⁵Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. ⁷It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸“Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? ¹¹So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. ¹²But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

Devotional

The Rev. Andy Greenhow, Special Projects Manager

By this point in Lent, I have long given up any observances that have to do with food. I’m back enjoying a glass of beer, eating meat, or chowing down on chocolate. A big part of my justification for doing so goes roughly along the lines of this passage from 1 Corinthians. “I’m free in Christ, justified by faith! I don’t need to withhold the pleasure of this steak/wine/ice cream! I’m not spiritually immature like those folks who have to give up food—this vegetarianism has served its purpose and I get it now.”

Hey, at least I abandoned my integrity theologically

But maybe the best part of Lent is the sweet relief of not pretending we’re mature or advanced in the faith. It’s an opportunity to entertain the notion that maybe we are weaker than we thought, that we stumble more readily than we would like to admit. There is freedom in saying, “I need help. I am not where I want to be.” And just like the believers living together as the early church, so we, in observing Lent together, get to look out for one another.

I hope we feel free enough to get in touch with our own weakness and lack of knowledge this Lent and, in so doing, grow in compassion for those around us, who are struggling along just like we are.

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for the opportunity in this season to reflect on our weakness and to know more of your power made perfect in weakness. Make us attentive to you and to one another. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.