

LENT DEVOTIONAL



LENT PROGRAM

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Rooted in the Reformed tradition, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is committed to the formation of women and men for theologically reflective ministry and to scholarship in service to the global Church of Jesus Christ.

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Miller Summer Youth Institute

Metro-Urban Institute

World Mission Initiative

Zeitah Excavations

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LENT DEVOTIONAL MARCH 7, 2020

SCRIPTURE

GENESIS 41:1-13

1 After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, 2 and there came up out of the Nile seven sleek and fat cows, and they grazed in the reed grass. 3 Then seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. 4 The ugly and thin cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. And Pharaoh awoke. 5 Then he fell asleep and dreamed a second time; seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. 6 Then seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them. 7 The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Pharaoh awoke, and it was a dream. 8 In the morning his spirit was troubled; so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh. 9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "I remember my faults today. 10 Once Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard. 11 We dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own meaning. 12 A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each according to his dream. 13 As he interpreted to us, so it turned out; I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."

DEVOTIONAL

Dr. Sandra A. Collins '87, Academia (2018)

In the recounting of the strange and terrible dreams in Genesis 41, Pharaoh's chief cupbearer suddenly says, "I remember my faults today" (v. 9). Such a poignant moment bears reflection.

The NIV translates this statement in terms of the cupbearer's suddenly seeing his "shortcomings"—as though he unexpectedly recalled where he had left his keys. In truth, the Hebrew here is one of the many words for sin: chet', conveying the condemnatory sense of sinning against someone, or causing grievous offense through one's actions. In the midst of serving this mercurial pharaoh, the cupbearer realizes he has failed the captive Joseph.

We are presented on one level with a paradox: even Joseph's own brothers, who sold him into slavery, have not yet come to such a conviction of spirit. But the cupbearer, calling his offense against Joseph to mind in this way, offers a meditation on the many little injustices that we, through sins of commission as well as omission, commit each and every day.

Such moments when our spirits are pricked urge confession as well as redress. Ours can be as simple as the cupbearer's "I remember my faults today" or as overwhelming as a sober discernment of our many grievous offenses. In fact, this exact wording is picked up in the General Confession of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer:

We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed.

The cupbearer remedied his sin against Joseph: he told Pharaoh of the Israelite who could interpret dreams. Then as now, the humility of confession opens a space for God's saving action to enter in. Through Christ's wounds, we are healed. Today, embrace that humble confession which allows space for salvation to take hold, to convict, and to transform.

PRAYER

Accept today, Lord, my humble and contrite heart. Forgive my actions that have caused pain to others. Show me the way forward, that I might act in accordance with your divine and awesome love in all things great and small. To the praise and glory of your name always, now and forever, amen.

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