

LENT DEVOTIONAL 2019



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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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World Mission Initiative

Zeitah Excavations

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LENT DEVOTIONAL APRIL 6, 2019

SCRIPTURE

JEREMIAH 23:9-15

- 9 Concerning the prophets:
My heart is crushed within me,
all my bones shake;
I have become like a drunkard,
like one overcome by wine,
because of the LORD
and because of his holy words.
- 10 For the land is full of adulterers;
because of the curse the land mourns,
and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up.
Their course has been evil,
and their might is not right.
- 11 Both prophet and priest are ungodly;
even in my house I have found their wickedness,
says the LORD.
- 12 Therefore their way shall be to them
like slippery paths in the darkness,
into which they shall be driven and fall;
for I will bring disaster upon them
in the year of their punishment,
says the LORD.
- 13 In the prophets of Samaria
I saw a disgusting thing:
they prophesied by Baal
and led my people Israel astray.
- 14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem
I have seen a more shocking thing:
they commit adultery and walk in lies;
they strengthen the hands of evildoers,
so that no one turns from wickedness;
all of them have become like Sodom to me,
and its inhabitants like Gomorrah.
- 15 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets:
“I am going to make them eat wormwood,
and give them poisoned water to drink;
for from the prophets of Jerusalem
ungodliness has spread throughout the land.”

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Jennifer L. Stroud, D.Min. – Parish Ministry / Pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Port St. Lucie, Fla.

Lent is traditionally a time of fasting and prayer—a time when we turn our eyes inward to look honestly at our lives and our walks with the savior we call Lord. Interestingly, the Lenten journey, our faith journey, starts with the birth of Christ into this world and the birth of Christ within us—and the inalterable joy and excitement we feel when we first believe in a God who would join us in this place. Just as when we first accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the celebration of Christmas is often a time of gaiety and celebration, a time when people are encouraged to give presents, write cards, and smile at strangers. For a brief period it appears to be a time of good will and peace among all human beings. Once a year, for a fleeting, shining moment, the world becomes a closer expression of the harmonic life God envisions for us all.

But soon—too soon—the loving inclusion fades. The unity between the diverse and varied expressions of humankind grows faint and all but disappears, like the fire and excitement a new believer feels tends to bank and dim with the passing of years. For often, before we realize it, we find ourselves in the January of our faith journey with our ego, pride, and selfishness back in place and firmly in control. God watches as many of us who call ourselves Christians, lose our sense of who and whose we are as we place politics over faith, group identity over oneness in the Body of Christ.

God's word tells us that everyone who calls on the Holy Name of Jesus is a member of the priesthood of all believers. Jeremiah warns us to take care that our lives, our actions, our words, and our hearts should reflect our God and the way of love and light. For how we Christians live our lives when the newness of Christ's birth within us fades will be seen and noted—not just by the people we are called to serve and care for, but by our Holy Lord as well. And Jesus warns us that we will, indeed, reap what we sow.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, please forgive me when I forget that You are God and the owner of my heart, the caregiver of my life and the teacher of my soul. I confess that the world is convincing in its teaching that the acquisition of material things can bring happiness and that being right and being in power are more important than following You. Forgive me when I choose to judge others because of their politics, their education, the color of their skin, or the amount of money they have in their pockets. The love of power, fame, and material wealth can twist my Christian intentions from selflessness to selfishness, from welcoming to wall-building, and from caring to critical. I repent from my lack of faithfulness and ask that You light the way of love for me to follow, so that I might be guided by the truth and the life found within the way of Jesus Christ, in whose Name I pray. Amen!

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