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LENT DEVOTIONAL MARCH 2, 2018

SCRIPTURE

GENESIS 43:1-15

1 Now the famine was severe in the land. 2 And when they had eaten up the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go again, buy us a little more food.” 3 But Judah said to him, “The man solemnly warned us, saying, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.’ 4 If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food; 5 but if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, ‘You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.’” 6 Israel said, “Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?” 7 They replied, “The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, ‘Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?’ What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down?’” 8 Then Judah said to his father Israel, “Send the boy with me, and let us be on our way, so that we may live and not die—you and we and also our little ones. 9 I myself will be surety for him; you can hold me accountable for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. 10 If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice.” 11 Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry them down as a present to the man—a little balm and a little honey, gum, resin, pistachio nuts, and almonds. 12 Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the top of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. 13 Take your brother also, and be on your way again to the man; 14 may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, so that he may send back your other brother and Benjamin. As for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.” 15 So the men took the present, and they took double the money with them, as well as Benjamin. Then they went on their way down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

DEVOTIONAL

Written by the Rev. Lois Swestyn '03, United Methodist Elder (retired), PTS Alumnae/i Council Member, Carmichaels, Pa.

Jacob/Israel, one of the great Patriarchs of the Bible, is not showing his best leadership at this time, but we can learn from his actions. He's in a time of crisis, a famine in the land. Decisions need to be made about purchasing grain. God has already provided grain through Jacob's son Joseph, who is now in Egypt. But for the family to get more needed grain from there, Jacob will have to risk sending along his beloved son Benjamin, Joseph's youngest brother. That's part of the deal Joseph made with his other brothers when they came for grain the first time. Jacob resists sending Benjamin, for much deceit had been played out in this family before. Perhaps understandably, Jacob thought that the less others knew about him, the better off he and his family were.

Many Christians operate on this same principle. They think that keeping others from knowing them well avoids problems. But like Jacob, such people are misled. For it is sin that loves darkness and secrets. Righteousness, on the other hand, loves light and truth. Good communication is a must in all relationships—especially in our relationship with God. And trust is the key.

In this passage we see that Jacob relied on God, but only as a last resort. God had been and would continue to be active in this family's life in times of trouble, famine, and reconciliation. Likewise, God is active at all times in our lives.

Is there a famine in your life today? Are you seeking God for direction? Are you trusting God with all your life?

PRAYER

All knowing God, we thank you for being active in all times of our life. We pray to be drawn closer to you through our honesty with you and others. May we rely on you first in our life and not as a last resort. Help us to recognize the 'famines' in our life and to trust you through every step of the journey to be fed, encouraged, hopeful, and in right relationship with others, especially with you. Amen.

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