



LENT DEVOTIONAL MARCH 21, 2017

SCRIPTURE

JEREMIAH 7:21-34

21 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. 22 For in the day that I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to them or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. 23 But this command I gave them, "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you." 24 Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but, in the stubbornness of their evil will, they walked in their own counsels, and looked backward rather than forward. 25 From the day that your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day; 26 yet they did not listen to me, or pay attention, but they stiffened their necks. They did worse than their ancestors did. 27 So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you. 28 You shall say to them: This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips.

29 Cut off your hair and throw it away;
raise a lamentation on the bare heights,
for the LORD has rejected and forsaken
the generation that provoked his wrath.

30 For the people of Judah have done evil in my sight, says the LORD; they have set their abominations in the house that is called by my name, defiling it. 31 And they go on building the high place of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire—which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind. 32 Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when it will no more be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter: for they will bury in Topheth until there is no more room. 33 The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the air, and for the animals of the earth; and no one will frighten them away. 34 And I will bring to an end the sound of mirth and gladness, the voice of the bride and bridegroom in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; for the land shall become a waste.

DEVOTIONAL

Critics of religion often claim that God is nothing more than human arrogance "writ large against the sky." It is sadly true that, rather than pursuing what it means for us to be made in God's image, we often try to remake God into ours! Jeremiah confronts a people persuaded that God is like them: unjust and bloodthirsty. They are sacrificing their own children to this "god" in the Valley of Hinnom—or, as the Gospels call it, Gehenna (Matt 5:22; Mark 9:34). Jeremiah calls his people, and us, back to the true worship of the true God, who requires not blood, but love and justice: "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you" (Jer 7:23).

PRAYER

Open our eyes, O Lord, to who you are, and to who we are. Grant us the clarity of vision never to confuse the two. This we pray in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, who alone "is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being" (Heb 1:3). Amen.

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