

LENT DEVOTIONAL APRIL 2, 2017

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SCRIPTURE

MARK 8:31-9:1

31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." 34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." 9: 1 And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

DEVOTIONAL

"You old Devil, you!" That was an expression popular with my father's generation, usually spoken man to man in what we today might call the "old boys club." "You old Devil"—an off-handed compliment to someone who has acquired something usually by nefarious means, but certainly an expression never intended to express evil—just a benign phrase one might say jokingly. However, in Jesus' day, and to the ears of Peter, it was a serious slap in the face—an affront to the senses! "You old Devil!" says Jesus—"Get behind me Satan!"

I am writing this Lenten devotional in the season of autumn, as Indian summer turns the landscape to vibrant hues of red and orange and the first hint of frost assaults our senses. It is a precursor to the long months of winter ahead, with the promise of renewal that comes each spring still a distant hope.

And as I write, questions loom as to whether peace, even civility, can be found amid the rancor in so many sectors of our society and world. "You old Devil, you," no longer seems the benign jest it used to be. Instead, it is a reminder of the evil that persists in each one of us. "Get behind me," Jesus commands. Get behind the only truth that leads to the hope of salvation. During this Lenten season, who will we stand behind?

PRAYER

Holy God, as we remember once more the way of the cross, may we empty our hearts of the enmity that divides and through the power of the Holy Spirit fall in step behind the only one who leads to salvation. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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