

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



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ABOUT PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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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Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies

Graduate Certificate in Urban Ministry

Spiritual Formation Certificate

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Continuing Education

Kelso Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology

Miller Summer Youth Institute

Metro-Urban Institute

World Mission Initiative

Zeitah Excavations

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 3, 2018

SCRIPTURE

ISAIAH 1:10-20

10 Hear the word of the LORD,
you rulers of Sodom!
Listen to the teaching of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!

11 What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
says the LORD;
I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of fed beasts;
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
or of lambs, or of goats.

12 When you come to appear before me,
who asked this from your hand?
Trample my courts no more;
13 bringing offerings is futile;
incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation—
I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity.

14 Your new moons and your appointed festivals
my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me,
I am weary of bearing them.

15 When you stretch out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.

16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
17 learn to do good;
seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
plead for the widow.

18 Come now, let us argue it out,
says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be like snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.

19 If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;
20 but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be devoured by the sword;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Paula V. Cooper '10/'13, Regional Liaison for East Central Africa, Presbyterian Church (USA), Louisville, Ky. / Metro-Urban Institute Advisory Council

Okay, God is piqued! In this passage of Isaiah, God sounds pretty annoyed with the leaders and people of Judah for their vain offerings and lack of obedience in the assemblies. God unequivocally says, “[T]hey have become a burden to me, I am

weary of bearing them.” But to me, it is liberating to know that even though God is piqued or weary at their (our) “fake” obedience and worship or liturgy styles, God ALWAYS provides opportunities—as often as necessary—for our behaviors and bad habits to be transformed into obedient actions that are pleasing to God. In verses 16-18, God provides step-by-step instructions.

In addition, God invites us in to an argument (One scholar says, “God deigns to argue the case with us, that all may see the just, nay, loving principle of His dealings with men”); and God still offers an option, a choice, between redemption and destruction. What gracefulness—because no matter what decision we make, God will be God! I, myself, choose the opportunity of redemption! Will you? Jesus came so that we “may have life and have life more abundantly.”

PRAYER

Dear Lord, during this Advent season we prepare ourselves for the Second Coming of Jesus, the Christ. May we open our minds and hearts to follow the instructions that lead to the opportunity of redemption so that we may be transformed into obedient, faithful, and truthful worshipers who present ourselves as “living sacrifices pleasing unto God” now and forever. Amen!

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