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SCRIPTURE

Revelation 2:18-29

18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze:

19 "I know your works your love, faith, service, and patient endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first. 20 But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. 22 Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; 23 and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve. 24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call 'the deep things of Satan,' to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden; 25 only hold fast to what you have until I come. 26 To everyone who conquers and continues to do my works to the end, I will give authority over the nations; 27 to rule them with an iron rod, as when clay pots are shattered 28 even as I also received authority from my Father. To the one who conquers I will also give the morning star. 29 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Samantha Lowery-Coggins '20

At Advent, Revelation is not among the portions of Scripture that pop into my head, or my heart.

Isaiah? Yes. John? Definitely.

This extended metaphor about a woman false prophet? No.

But recently that changed for me, thanks to a rabbi. During the Jewish high holidays in early September, my colleague in Morgantown, WV, where I live and work as a campus pastor, pointed me to Psalm 27. One refrain of that psalm is “Wait for the Lord!”

When he referred me to this Scripture, which his Jewish tradition and my Presbyterian tradition have in common, the rabbi told me, “Think of us [those celebrating Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur], when you read about coming home to God.”

As we wait for God—like Psalm 27 insists we do—to show up as Emmanuel, I believe this passage from Revelation 2 has something to say about how to live in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives (Ps. 27:4).

It is one of seven letters written to churches in Asia Minor, and it shows off the wily blend of genres in Revelation as a whole. Like other Jewish apocalyptic literature, this Scripture is full of symbolism, and it reflects a context of oppression. And like other prophetic literature, it looks forward, not just backward into history.

The passage is not actually about an unfaithful woman, as the Jezebel references to 1 Kings and 2 Kings may lead us to think. We know this analogy was a typical format used to express the importance of discerning what is of God, and what is not, in the context of a patriarchal society.

Discerning how to avoid what is not-God is a task, in and of itself. As a new parent to a baby born in February, I am all too aware of what I idolize in my life right now: sleep. If there was a not-God who could promise me one extra hour of sleep every night, I would worship at their feet (yesterday).

It is a cliché about parenting, and it sounds hyperbolic. Yet for me, it is undeniably true. So what saves me from this not-God (in addition to naps on the weekend)? Remembering that there is a fourth reality which is Jesus Christ, a layer atop the brokenness of our pandemic-riddled, productivity-laden world.

There is a reality in which my zombie-like, tired body is enough for my daughter. There is a reality in which I am not alone at 4:15 a.m. rocking my child back to sleep, but together with other caregivers who are doing the same. There is a reality in which it is ok to function with the new brain synapses that come with parenthood. There is a reality in which I am not lazy or unproductive, but carer and keeper to a vulnerable human being.

This is the reality of Jesus Christ, the reality of God intervening in human form, affirming the sacredness of our physical selves: we are nothing less than children of God.

PRAYER

God who intervenes in human form, during this Advent, may we come home to you with this deep knowledge: we are your children. Amen.

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