

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



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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 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

FACULTY

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 12, 2018

SCRIPTURE

JOHN 7:53-8:11

7:53 Then each of them went home, 8:1 while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. 3 The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, 4 they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. 5 Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 6 They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. 9 When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. 10 Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. S. Balajiedlang (Bala) Khylllep, Associate Director, World Mission Initiative

We live in a very polarized world where we can't seem to have an open conversation with one another without being in conflict. An open conversation with mutual respect for one another's opinions even when we disagree seems to have lost favor in our society today. We are automatically programmed to point fingers, blame, disagree, and even condemn others. This is exactly what the scribes and the Pharisees were doing in the Scripture reading today. Just because they disliked what Jesus was teaching and doing for the least of these in the society, they sought ways to get rid of him. They dragged and shamed a woman who was caught in adultery not necessarily to settle the matter, but mainly to test Jesus and to see whether they could find ways to condemn him and have him arrested and then be killed.

Yet what Jesus did changed hearts. Jesus simply asked the religious leaders and then, in turn, asks every one of us to take a deep look within ourselves first, before we jump into negative conclusions about others. Doing so is difficult for us. And to be honest, one problem in our world today is the fact that most of us generally see ourselves as heroes, as good and righteous persons, whereas when evaluating others we tend to villainize or criminalize their behaviors we see as wrong. I think the world would be a better place if we could recognize that within ourselves there is a mixture of both evil and good and that through God's grace and strength we are able to choose good for ourselves and for others.

I've been pondering lately the state of our country and our world—the hate, the prejudice, and the heartless attitude we as humans have toward one another. I can't help but ask myself, "Is it possible for us to listen and understand one another ever again amid our current differences?" My hope and prayer is that as we are waiting for the coming of our Lord this Advent, may we have the courage to deal with one another and with ourselves as Jesus would have us do—to love in the face of hate, to forgive in the face of condemnation, to be kind in the face of bigotry, and to walk in humility in the face of superiority.

PRAYER

Gracious God, thank you for loving and accepting us even when we don't deserve it. Forgive our inability to listen and our desire to condemn others within our hearts. Help us to see our daily need of your forgiveness so that we can, in turn, offer grace and mercy toward others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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