

Lenten Devotional March 3, 2021

Scripture

Jeremiah 3:6-18

6 The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah: Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and played the whore there? 7 And I thought, "After she has done all this she will return to me"; but she did not return, and her false sister Judah saw it. 8 She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce; yet her false sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. 9 Because she took her whoredom so lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree. 10 Yet for all this her false sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but only in pretense, says the LORD. 11 Then the LORD said to me: Faithless Israel has shown herself less guilty than false Judah. 12 Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: Return, faithless Israel, says the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, says the LORD; I will not be angry for ever. 13 Only acknowledge your guilt, that you have rebelled against the LORD your God, and scattered your favors among strangers under every green tree, and have not obeyed my voice, says the LORD. 14 Return, O faithless children, says the LORD, for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. 15 I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. 16 And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall no longer say, "The ark of the covenant of the LORD." It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed; nor shall another one be made. 17 At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no longer stubbornly follow their own evil will. 18 In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your ancestors for a heritage.

Devotional

The Rev. Minh Towner '13

We live in a world that encourages us to be independent, self-reliant. With an attitude of entitlement, we work hard to pursue the world's view of happiness to meet our fleshly desires. No matter how hard we try, failure is inevitable, and disappointment follows. We question God when things don't turn out favorably for us. We even question God's existence, or we live wearing a mask pretending who we are not.

God knows our imperfection. God knows us more than we know ourselves. We are "faithless Israel . . . false Judah." We are sinners, but God still loves us unconditionally. God is calling us "return" to him no matter what. The desire of God's heart is to care for us, even though we are sinners, as long we truly repent. If we do so, his promise will be delivered as he has said: "I will give you shepherds after my own heart." In Isaiah 40 God says to his people, "I will save you. I have called you by name—you are mine"—a promise that today also holds true for us.

Prayer

God of love, God of mercy, you know our weaknesses and our sinful nature more than we know ourselves. We run after our heart's desire instead of being obedient and following your will. We live our lives for this world and not for you. We ask you for your forgiveness. Thank you for your unfailing love. We pray that our souls will always be on fire as we run after your heart. In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.