

Lent Devotional March 25, 2025

Scripture

John 7:37-52

37 On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, 38 and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" 39 Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

40 When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, "This is really the prophet." 41 Others said, "This is the Messiah." But some asked, "Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? 42 Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?" 43 So there was a division in the crowd because of him. 44 Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

45 Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not arrest him?" 46 The police answered, "Never has anyone spoken like this!" 47 Then the Pharisees replied, "Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? 48 Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? 49 But this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed." 50 Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, 51 "Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?" 52 They replied, "Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee."

Devotion

The Rev. Debbie Smith '18

What a vision! No one is thirsty! No one is hungry! Imagine no more news stories of starving children and refugees. Don't we all yearn for such a world? A place where every person of any ability can thrive with grace and dignity. A place where nothing stands in the way of God's reflected image shining forth from each one to bring him glory.

As compelling as that picture is, we see people responding in different ways. Some catch the vision and can't wait to jump on board. Some aren't sure what to think but are curious. Others find the notion of 'living water for everyone' to be ludicrous or even dangerous. Imagine all the changes in society, government, business, and politics that would be needed for this to happen. Some of those changes are complicated and difficult—isn't it just less disruptive to keep things as they are? If we can cast doubt on the messenger as a Galilean poser or an unrealistic rube, perhaps that gets us off the hook for considering how life might be different. After all, some of those changes might require giving up something. Is my loss worth this wild kingdom vision?

Lent offers us a time of lament and repentance. A time to yearn for Jesus' vision of the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. A time to notice what gets in the way of dignity and grace for all. Lent is a time to expand our imagination for what is possible, even if it requires letting go of what we are comfortable with.

Prayer

Lord, your vision of the kingdom is lovely and yet feels impossible. But this is what you have promised and invited us into. And if you have promised and invited, then we can trust that your Spirit will lead us.

Help us release anything that hinders our energy, imagination, intelligence, and love so that we can embrace the work of the kingdom you have called us to. Amen.