



EVENING PRAYER DEVOTIONAL

SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2020

Readings: Psalm 51; Proverbs 19; Ephesians 2:11-end

As a fellow Gentile, I truly take to heart this passage from Ephesians. Continuing on Paul's theme of grace in salvation from the previous passage, Paul hones in on the grace given to the Gentiles. It is a grace where you did not belong before, but now you have been brought near by the blood of Christ. You can see quite a parallel between our passage yesterday and today. Each one begins with a former status; deadness (v. 1) and separation (v. 12). And each one provides God's crashing rescue; "But God, being rich in mercy" (v. 4) and "But now in Christ Jesus" (v. 13). Later in Ephesians, this would be considered the mystery of the Gospel revealed. It is what the Lord meant when He promised Abraham that by his offspring there would be blessing to the nations. And the blessing comes in the person and work of Jesus Christ; Abraham's offspring.

In Jesus we are brought together in peace with the Father and with each other. This is not merely a peace where we all hold hands and get along with each other. It cuts deeper than the politically correct, Miss America's answer for world peace. It is a restorative peace with the Father and with each other. We were lost, dead, strangers, alienated, and without hope, but in Christ Jesus we are fellow citizens and saints. It is a restorative peace that speaks into our place of belonging. Did you ever feel like you didn't belong? I certainly felt this way among my peers when I was much younger. You feel out of place and out of sorts. You wonder why the relationships you long for don't pan out.

In the end, the Church saved me. Adult Christians became my deepest friends, and the Church became a place where I could belong. I saw the restorative peace of Christ within His Body. Yes, the Church is a complicated group of people. We say things we shouldn't say and do things we shouldn't do. We will always need to confess this, but what will always be greater than our sin is the peace of Christ in the cross, holding us together.

The season of Lent, and in time of social distancing, we start to realize that we have limits. We are limited by what we can and can't do. If we can see the Church as a group of redeemed sinners with limits, then we can extend grace even in some of the worst circumstances. Consider how Paul describes such a wondrous group of people: we are part of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. Our growth and development will only come through Christ, so let us cling to Him as we care for one another.

Baptized child of the Triune God, rest easy upon your pillows tonight. Amen.

- Fr. Joe

