



Living Lent | March 10

Story Telling the God Way

*Then he called for a famine in the land
and destroyed the supply of bread.
He sent a man before them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
They bruised his feet in fetters;
his neck they put in an iron collar.
Until his prediction came to pass,
the word of the Lord tested him.
The king sent and released him;
the ruler of the peoples set him free.
He set him as a master over his household,
as a ruler over all his possessions,
To instruct his princes according to his will
and to teach his elders wisdom.*

Psalm 105: 16-22 (NRSV)

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

Have you ever noticed that when we tell stories to friends and family (especially stories of conflict) we usually end up as the hero of the story? Whether it's a parent-teacher conference, an employee review, an encounter at the grocery store, or a fight with the ex, we tend to remember and emphasize our good intentions and our brilliant replies but recall only the other person's offenses. As we tell it, we were the calm, rational, generous interlocutor; they were the unvirtuous, uncouth aggressors:

“So then she gets this screechy tone in her voice and says...”

“So I calmly replied, ‘Ma’am, I’m sorry you feel that way...”

“But he never even read the reports I wrote, when I specifically asked him...”

“And I’m not going to hold a grudge, you know me, but still...”

Even if we didn’t feel like heroes when it happened, we shape the story in hindsight. It’s natural, I suppose, even if it’s not very fair.

That is what makes Psalm 105 so striking to me. It’s a retelling of the story of Israel, and in our passage, the author recounts the story of Joseph. If anyone ought to be the retrospective hero, it should be him! Favorite son with a fabulous coat, sold into slavery, falsely accused, falsely imprisoned, lied to, abandoned, and finally-- FINALLY!--vindicated before his family and the entire nation. Joseph is a hero.

But that’s not how the story is told. Psalm 105 says that he was not the hero at all. Instead, it was God who summoned a famine on the land to bring Jacob’s tribe down to Egypt. It was God who “had sent a man ahead of them.” It was God who tested Joseph by his word. Though Joseph was in fetters and a collar of iron, God was firmly in charge. And centuries later during the Exodus, it was God who “brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing...that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the LORD!” (Psalm 105:43-45).

It’s worth taking some time to think about how our stories will be told from the perspective of eternity. It’s worth imagining how, through all the ups and downs of our lives, it will be said it was God who was working his good and gracious plans.

In fact, it may even be worth telling our stories that way starting now.

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ

Drew Thompson is the Pastor of the Union City Church located in Brunswick, Georgia. Pastor Thompson describes the Plans and God’s Movement within Union City Church by quoting a passage from Proverbs 19:21: “Long ago, Solomon said that though our plans are many, it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” Pastor Drew recalls “[t]hose words proved true at Union City this season. We had plans, and when they fell by the wayside, God moved in ways that only He can.” Therein lies the description of Union City Church: “A part of God’s reconciliation movement.” Drew and his wife are parents of two beautiful, adopted children and support all children of God, recognizing that Morningstar is also an “adopted parent” to so many kids.

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