

## 2022 Lenten Week 2

March 13, 2022

Welcome to Week 2. This Lent we began by sitting with the raw realization, “I have an enemy. I am an enemy.” Each of us may not feel direct hostility or vitriol from another person yet we may have experienced degrees of that response at different times. It is not comfortable – whether we bear any responsibility or not.

This Sunday we are asked to look in the mirror. Do we “see” an enemy there? How might we be in enmity with ourselves?

We keep in mind Paul’s words in Romans 5. Continue to reflect and consider the layers of truth speaking to us:

*“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”*

**INVITATION** (feel free to select any of these questions)

- When you were growing up, what was one thing you felt insecure about? Or was there something that you valued too much? What were the sources that contributed to this perspective of self?
- Do you consider yourself a “half-full” or “half-empty” kind of person? How does this get lived out in your daily activities – thoughts, behaviors, responses to conflict, etc.?
- What are some personal habits that you are not necessarily pleased with? When you have had difficulties changing or overcoming them, how do you feel?

### RECEIVING THE WORD

This week’s texts are II Corinthians 12:6-10 and Ephesians 6:10-17.

#### II CORINTHIANS 12 (NRSV)

<sup>6</sup>But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, <sup>7</sup>even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being

too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. <sup>8</sup> Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, <sup>9</sup> but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

- Paul does not disclose the nature of his thorn. What might it be? How do you think it affected him?
- If God were to decline your prayer request three times, what would be your reaction? Would this cause you to question God’s love? What may enable Paul to hold onto God’s invisible activity?

### **EPHESIANS 6 (NRSV)**

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. <sup>15</sup> As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

- How do you typically read this passage? What does it mean to put on the whole armor of God?
- What difference does it make if we see God as active agent in our standing against adversity?

### **SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP WITH OTHERS**

These questions are designed for your group to engage and apply the biblical truths into your Lenten experience. Feel free to select which one seems most appropriate.

- What has been a personal “thorn” that seemingly persists?

- Pastor January says that false messages about ourselves lead to false self-images, which in turn foster false images of God. What does she mean by this statement? What are some false self-imageries you struggle with, and how does it impact your image of God?
- How might we be our own enemy? How can your community present truth, light, and love to you?

## THE PRAYER OF LAMENT

Close your time with “The Prayer of Lament.” This week we use Psalm 51 to model our own lament conversation with God.

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. <sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. <sup>3</sup> For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. <sup>4</sup> Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment. <sup>5</sup> Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me. <sup>6</sup> You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

<sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

<sup>8</sup> Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. <sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. <sup>13</sup> Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

<sup>14</sup> Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance. <sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. <sup>16</sup> For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. <sup>17</sup> The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

<sup>18</sup> Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup> then you will delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.