



Lenten Reflections

The Divine Intervention

March 12, 2016

Scripture

Jeremiah 11:18-20

I knew their plot because the LORD informed me;
at that time you, O LORD, showed me their doings.

Yet I, like a trusting lamb led to slaughter,
had not realized that they were hatching plots against me:

“Let us destroy the tree in its vigor;
let us cut him off from the land of the living,
so that his name will be spoken no more.”

But, you, O LORD of hosts, O just Judge,
searcher of mind and heart,
Let me witness the vengeance you take on them,
for to you I have entrusted my cause!

Our Scripture Reflection

Jeremiah did not want to be a prophet! When God called him, he made excuses: "I am too young, I don't know how to speak." God, however, had a mission for Jeremiah and He would not change His mind. Jeremiah surrendered and it cost him dearly: pain, torment, rejection, public ridicule. In a most human fashion he asks God to allow him to live long

enough to watch his enemies suffer. Interesting, as God allows the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem, Jeremiah happens to be nearby watching the entire event. God's vengeance happened on His terms and schedule, not Jeremiah's, and as the result of the people's failure to repent and reform. Jeremiah would learn the difficult lesson of patient suffering as the result of fidelity to God.

Food for your Journey

In a sermon at Harvard University's Memorial Church on September 23, 2001, shortly after the terrorist attacks, the late Peter Gomes told the story of Ernest Gordon, who was captured on the River Kwai during World War II. "While in a Japanese prison camp, Gordon and his fellow British captives were initially very religious, reading their Bibles, praying, singing hymns, witnessing, and testifying to their faith. They were hoping and expecting that God would reward them and fortify them for their faith by freeing them or at least mitigating their captivity.

"God didn't deliver, however, and the men became both disillusioned and angry. They gave up on the outward display of their faith; but after a while, as the men began tending to the needs of their fellows -- caring for them, protecting the weaker ones and in some cases dying for one another -- they began to discern something of a spirit of God in their midst. They discovered that religion was not what you believed but what you did for others when it seemed that you could do nothing at all. Compassion gave them their inner strength, and their inner strength gave them compassion.

"Could it be that amid the cries of vengeance and violence and warfare, the inner strength we so desperately seek is the strength that comes from hearing and heeding the cry of the other?"

Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, While hanging on the cross for me, You uttered no words of hatred or vengeance. Instead, Lord, You suffered patiently and forgave those who killed You. Lord, when I entertain thoughts of harming those who harm me, help me to pause, catch my breath, and picture in my mind You on the cross at Calvary. Amen.