

Lent Day 2

Thursday March 2, 2017

Reading: Romans 1:8-15

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles. I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

Reflection

While I was finishing my undergrad degree I was pastoring a church in Muskoka part-time. One Sunday during the prayers of the people I had put my family on the list for prayer. Ron, my father in law, had frontal lobe dementia and he was getting worse. We were all feeling the strain of caring for him. As I was praying through the requests I came to my own and suddenly found myself unable to pray. I was so caught off guard. The tears came, I was thinking through my surprise, and I was trying to get back on track. "Just pull yourself together," I ordered myself, but I couldn't. Finally, our song leader came and prayed for me and the service was able to move forward. What was so appalling to me was to discover my own attitude in the midst of it all. I actually felt weak for needing someone to pray for me. Somehow, I had imbibed the cultural thinking that we all have to take care of ourselves.

That is not the picture that Paul gives us of the Christian life. Paul needs, and he knows the Romans need, and we need each other to strengthen each other's faith through the gifting God has given to each of us. During this season of Lent we might have some noble image of us walking this journey alone — kind of like Denzel Washington's character in the movie *The Book of Eli*; walking alone and confidently through a broken and burned world. Too often, that's the picture we have of Paul. But everywhere Paul is looking for people and Romans is no different. He longs to see them and he wants them to be in no doubt about it. Paul needs them and they need him. In the same way we need one another for our own journeys of penitence and prayer.

In our Sunday morning Sunday School class we memorize Scripture and last week was a verse on fellowship, "Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works." (Hebrews 10:24) If we really want to grow as disciples during this season of Lent, if we long for renewal then we need to long for the relationships and gifts of our body of Christians. Northview, we need one another for strength and that's not a weakness — it's God's design.

Prayer

Lord, in our weakness your strength is magnified. Thank you for your love and the gift of your people. Help us to rely on each other and to motivate each other to deeper seas of faith. Amen.