

## **Lent Day 4**

Saturday March 4, 2017

**Reading:** Romans 1:18-32

### **Reflection**

Kids are curious. One of the responsibilities of the parent is to encourage and discourage that curiosity appropriately. An important developmental step is letting your child go out of your sight. I remember our first daughter, Cassidy, doing this. She would go around the corner and then come back to make sure we were still there. Through this she learned trust and was able to separate herself from us. An important step. But there were other times when we needed to stop her. When she started to play with the electrical outlet we had to say, no and then physically stop her before she got zapped. Between these two poles is a middle ground. There are things that you can say no to as a parent because those things are not good, but also not life threatening. In these cases the old adage “the hot stove can be the best teacher,” comes into play. For those of us who have ever touched a hot stove (and I’m not suggesting we let our children do this as a matter of course) we have learned definitively why we should not do so.

Our Scripture passage today bears some resemblance to this touching the hot stove. Three times Paul, in describing the sinfulness of humanity, says “God gave them over” (24, 26, 28). I think a lot of people both in the church and out read this as saying that there is a ‘badness’ in some of humanity that God cannot love and so he just parts company from them. That is not a good reading of God or of Romans. First of all, Paul is not describing some of humanity, he’s describing all of humanity. So, if we conclude that this is about God not associating with those who fit this description, then we’re all done for.

What is happening here is that humanity has fallen under the powers of Sin and Death. This version of humanity is what results: we have abandoned God and we have become dehumanized. We live in a way that is inconsistent with what we were made for. What are God’s choices meeting this in his creation? Destroy, accept, or remake. God chose remake and somehow this giving over of sinful humanity to the powers of Sin and Death plays a part in this remaking. In light of what we know is the rescue, the cross of Jesus, we shouldn’t be surprised. Just as Jesus was given over to the powers of Sin and Death on the cross as the means of breaking those powers, we our being given over to these powers is simply precursor to God’s rescue of us from them. In Romans 11:32 Paul says, “For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.”

In other words, God has and hasn’t rejected sinful humanity, which is all of us. Yes he has given us over to those powers, but only so he can redeem and rescue all of us from those powers. The gospel is throughly cross-shaped. So, as we think through the themes of Lent we don’t have to beat ourselves up when we see sin in our lives. Nor should we think that God has abandoned us because he’s become tired of our sinning ways. No, God has broken the powers of Sin and Death in the cross, so now we are free from both the guilt and the power of Sin. In all of this the message is that God loves us and will even use our rejection and failure to bring us new life.

### **Prayer**

Gracious God, thank you for your rescue and redemption. Thank you for bearing with us when we rejected you and for using our rejection as a means of our redemption. You are amazing. Amen.