

Lent, Day 19

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

Revelation 11:1–14

We often use romantic language to demonstrate the intensity of feeling and commitment we have to certain people. For example, it would not be unusual for me to say, “I would die for my children.” Those who heard me say such a thing would think it was right and good for me to say it. Of course, none of us know for certain if we would have the courage if the time should come, though we hope we would. Unfortunately, there are situations in our world where those opportunities may come. We might need to trade our life for the life of another.

Paul paints some of the shocking glory of the gospel when he says in the book of Romans, “ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6–8). The heart of the gospel is Jesus’s death and resurrection for those who are his enemies (by their choice). So it should be no surprise that part of our own witness needs to embody this same story.

That is what is happening in this portion of Revelation 11. The temple is the church, the people of God. It is both the place of God’s presence and it is in part left to be victimized by the nations. Shifting from that metaphor, the church is the two witnesses. We are like Moses, who stood up to Pharaoh with plagues, and Elijah who stood up to Ahab with drought. But ultimately, it is not the signs that we do which will move people. Rather, it is our death and resurrection that leads to their deliverance.

After the earthshaking events nine-tenths are spared by God’s mercy. Where, in Elijah’s story, only seven thousand were left. Here only seven thousand are lost. This is God’s mercy which leads to the nations giving glory to God. It is through our Christ-like death and resurrection that the nations will turn to God.

For us in lent we are reminded that we cannot spare ourselves. We must give ourselves over totally to God because he has us on mission. We are his agents of redemption, not simply through our words but through our whole lives. We say things like, “I would die for my kids,” because it expresses closeness. But, we are called to live and die—to spend ourselves, like Jesus—for the world; those who would see us as enemy. It is through this self-sacrifice that we see the world come to faith.

Prayer

Giver of life, help us to give our all for you and for the world that you love. Help us to see as you see so we may love as you love. Amen.