

Lent, Day 27
Friday, April 5, 2019

Revelation 15:1–8

If you've never had a brother, particularly an older one, you may have no idea how important judgment is. I do have an older brother who was not just older but physically imposing and able to outsmart me most days. When injustice was done, I could not reason with him to make it right. He insisted that what I called injustice was fair. He also called what I named fair as injustice. I needed someone with authority and an unbiased sense of what is right to judge between us. Her name was mom. Whenever I felt like I was getting ripped off I could simply bellow, "MOOOOMMMM!" And demand that she judge the case.

When we talk about God's judgment we tend to think in more negative terms, likely because the church often paints God's judgment in such hellish terms in order to frighten people into surrendering to God through the self-preservation instinct. It's hard to overcome that damage, but if we read Scripture rightly and understand God's self-revelation in Christ rightly, then we will understand that God's judgment is a good and necessary thing. Just like Mom's.

Our passage is still centred around those who bear witness to the lamb and who have suffered from the dragon, the beast, and the sub-beast. They have suffered like the children of Israel in Egypt, God has responded, they have passed through the waters (death), they have come to mount Sinai, and they have come to the (heavenly) tabernacle. Now they sing the song of Moses for their great deliverance. God is also going to show his goodness by judging Babylon (Rome and other contemporary systems of oppression particularly to God's people). Complete wrath is complete justice, not wanton destruction and torture.

The more I read Scripture, the more I see the theme of reconciliation between people as a key feature. We are too comfortable in our day and age just cutting people off as toxic, or I don't like them. We don't want to do the hard work of sitting with them face to face to talk about the offence and doing all we can to make it right, to make peace. Never mind the willingness to be wronged in order to maintain the relationship. Yet, this is what the cross is all about and it's our determination to be a reconciled community that points to the truth of our message about the reconciling power of the cross. One feature of God's judgment in this regard, is if you will not forgive a person, but will keep them guilty before you then God will do the same to us in his judgment. If we refuse to extend grace how can we claim to be recipients of grace?

Lent is a time of self-examination. We should also take time to examine our relationships. Is there relationships, particularly within the church, that we need to extend grace, practice forgiveness, or seek it for ourselves? Now is the time, because God will judge completely and we want to be on the side of right.

Prayer

Search us O knower of our hearts and reveal us to ourselves. Show us where there is broken relationship and where bitterness has set in. Humble us so we may walk in the way of your Son. Amen.