

Lent, Day 31  
Wednesday, April 10, 2019

Revelation 18:4–8

I remember years ago, when I was a new Christian, working at a dry cleaners. One day a man came in for his cleaning. As he began to depart I could see he was working himself up for something. Finally, he thrust a newsletter at me with the words, “here. Here’s something for you to read.” He then started to fly towards the door, when I said, “hold on. What’s this?” He explained it was literature from his church. I suspected that my church and his church wouldn’t necessarily line up so I asked him more about his journey and faith.

I was shocked when he described himself as just living a perfect, sinless life while he waited for God to come and destroy the wicked. At the time I focused on the idea of a person living a perfect, sinless life and was only mildly disturbed by his comments about the world. However, as the years have passed I’ve chewed on the second half of his description.

The church has a necessary “us and them” mentality. Without this, there is no place for evangelism or conversion. Rather, we would simply baptize the culture and that is not our calling. However, the “us and them” is not to be hostile or escapist. The church, like Jesus, exists for the world.

In our passage today, the heavenly voice says, “Come out of her...” Wright suggests that even at this stage of the judgment the voice may be speaking to those who have not yet turned to him. After all, he is the God who calls a people who are not his, his. Our posture towards the world should have this same level of compassion and mercy. We ought not be waiting for the fire to fall, but like Abraham, seeking to rescue all we can before its too late.

For our own lenten journey this also reminds us that we can never grow lax. We cannot be satisfied with our progress into holiness. We cannot have an attitude that I’ve come this far, I don’t need to go farther. Rather, we should always be open to the voice that calls us away from our own iniquities.

Prayer

Creator of the world and lover of all people, give us a heart after your own. Help us to love what you love even as we hate what you hate. Fill us with compassion and mercy for others even as we dread our own sin. Amen.