

Lenten Devotional 2020

Monday, March 2, 2020
Day 5, Exodus 5

To Make Matters Worse

“They said, ‘May the Lord look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.’” (Exodus 5:21)

If you ever need convincing that Scripture is not a fairytale all you have to do is read a story like this one. There is no fairy godmother to wave a wand and make everything alright even for a few hours. No, the God of Israel encounters the world as it actually is, not as we would wish it to be.

Moses, Aaron, the elders of the sons of Israel go before Pharaoh, just as God said, and ask to go to the mountain of God to worship. Pharaoh, as God foretold, will not let them leave. This is a slave economy after all. As well, Pharaoh sensing his fears coming true decides he needs to put an end to this idea of leaving. He makes the work harder without lessening the quota. People who are too tired won't try to leave. People who are afraid that worse could come won't try to leave. Pharaoh tries to keep control by pressing his boot down harder on the neck of the people. As a result, the people turn on Moses and Aaron.

Poor Moses, this is everything he was afraid would happen. He turns to God to intercede for the people. After all they are suffering for declaring God's name to Pharaoh. The people suffer for God. Surely God will intervene.

There is an old adage, “things will get worse before they get better.” That can certainly be true for those following God. That's not because God doesn't care, but because fallen and sinful human beings have a habit of hanging onto their sin. There are even times when we are tempted to try to coax a guarantee from God before we act. We want him to promise that everything will be okay. God promises he will be with us in all circumstances, but no more than that.

C. S. Lewis picks this up wonderfully in his children's book *Prince Caspian*. Lucy finally comes face to face with Aslan the Lion after choosing to follow her brothers rather than him the day before. During the course of conversation she realizes that she should have chosen to follow Aslan and that if she had things would have turned out better. She asks him so, but—typically—he tells her he does not say what might have been. Only what will be now that she follows him.

You might be in the midst of dark times—keep following God obediently, even if things seem to get harder. You won't be magicked out. Rather, God promises that if you follow him he will be with you in every circumstance and he will bring you through. Notice that Moses doesn't run away this time. He turns to God. Don't run, turn.

Prayer

Living God, hear our prayers and help us to hold on to you in every circumstance. Make us faithful in hard times rather than wishing for a quick fix. Help us to hold onto your presence and your promise. Amen.