



Lent reflection for Thursday, March 16th

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Luke 7:18-23

The disciples of John reported all these things to him. So John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' When the men had come to him, they said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"' Jesus* had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind. And he answered them, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers* are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.'

Today's reflection is by Steve Geick

Every time I hear bad news, I get a little better at ignoring it.

I hear about an act of violence. I hear about people getting sick or being born with disabilities. Tragedies and hostilities paint the airwaves and the internet. People in some far-off regions are said to be suffering poverty and injustice. People in some nearby neighborhoods are said to be suffering the same.

Even now I avoid the most precise language as my mind works its comfort muscle, abstracting away the details. General ideas are easier to swallow than specifics.

So, gunfire ending a human life simply becomes violence. Blindness and disease are merely tragedies. A child going hungry is just another example of poverty.

I think we process bad news by forming abstractions. To an extent, that's probably healthy. Fixating on these terrible realities, or mistaking ourselves for superheroes who can shoulder their burden on our own, seems an only somewhat shorter path to apathy than ignoring them.

We are inhabitants of a beautiful corrupted creation, where bad things lurk around every corner. I think we should both process them and engage with them.

But in reading this passage of scripture, I learn that we do not actually need to accept them.

I believe that the voice which convinces us to make peace with those saddest aspects of our world, the one that tells us to take the bad with the good and question no further - belongs to the devil.

When we succumb to the notion that death and decay have some sort of rightful place in this creation - that we need to accept the world's tendency toward them, in order to eke out the bright spots that shine in between - that's when we start marching to the drumbeat of darkness.

I hope that everytime I hear good news, I get a little better at believing it. I know, at least, that hearing it helps. Even John the Baptist had to hear it more than once.

And how appropriate that the reassurance John received would come secondhand, calling to mind the sense of separation from God that we often feel as inhabitants of a world where bad news seems to ring louder over time.

God lives in us and speaks to us, but he also sends disciples to spread his message of peace and revolution. He sends us out to teach others that a better kingdom is at hand.

When we spread this healing message, through love, service, worship, and proclamation, we're doing the same work those disciples did when they assured John the Baptist that the good news is true. The blind see. The lame walk. The sick are cleansed. The dead are raised. Jesus is who he says he is.

And that means that the God of the universe - from whom all good things flow - loves us and cares for us more than we can presently imagine.

Steve Geick lives in Windsor Terrace with his girlfriend Marisa and their dog Piper. He enjoys birding, martial arts, and an ever-changing rotation of other hobbies.

