

Daily Devotion, Tuesday, September 1, 2020

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Revelation 3:7-13

⁷“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens: ⁸“I know your works. Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying—I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. ¹⁰Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. ¹¹I am coming soon; hold fast to what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. ¹²If you conquer, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ¹³Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

I get why there is division in the world right now. In reality, there has always been division in our world. People love to create categories and groups. People love to say, “I am like this, but I am not like that”. People love to feel like they belong somewhere, and by doing so, exclude others from the same place. If we want to get biblical with this reality, we can go back to Cain and Abel, and their division between a good offering and an insufficient offering, self-worth and self-loathing. We can turn to Noah, and see all of the wicked people who were extinguished from the earth during the reported flood. We can look again at the story about the Tower of Babel, and witness God’s decision to separate the people, as they are trying to unite and become like God. And those are just the first eleven chapters!

In the reading assigned for today, from the third chapter of Revelation, an angel of the church reveals that the Lord will discern between two groups of people, those who have kept the word and not denied the name of God, and those who are aligned with the synagogue of Satan. I bet you didn’t expect to read that phrase today, “Synagogue of Satan”. These people say that they are Jews and are not. Their lies and unfaithfulness will lead them to bow down at the feet of the faithful. Division is real.

I despise division. I do not receive the inspired words that we hear today, with a thankful heart. I refuse to claim that anyone is a part of the synagogue of Satan. I do not want anyone to bow down before me.

I think that the reason for this is because I cannot shake an image from my mind. It is the image of our Lord that we experience each Maundy Thursday. As our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, removes his outer robe and bows down at the feet of his disciples. At which point, Jesus washes their feet, in an act of service and care. This picture of Jesus does not match the message above today, where division is accepted and lifted up. I have no doubt that the people who heard the words from Revelation 3:7-13, at the time that they were written, needed to hear these words. I trust that God gave them inspiration and guidance with the message. Yet, for me, today, I cannot decipher the words of grace and comfort that are meant for the people of God in this reading. As of this moment, as I mourn the division that exists in the world, I will take verse 10 as my guide, and I will wait patiently with the Word of God, and trust that God will deliver us all from this hour of trial that has fallen upon our world.