

Pastor's Letter

March 10, 2024—4th Sunday of Lent

Dear Church Family

Included in the readings for today is one of the most beautiful of the psalms, Psalm 137:

By the streams of Babylon
we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
On the aspens of that land
we hung up our harps.
For there our captors asked of us
the lyrics of our songs,
And our despoilers urged us to be joyous:
“Sing for us the songs of Zion!”
How could we sing a song of the LORD
in a foreign land?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand be forgotten!
May my tongue cleave to my palate
if I remember you not,
If I place not Jerusalem
ahead of my joy.

This psalm so touchingly conveys the longing of the heart for home. And home is not just a physical locality. In our first reading for today we read in 2 Chronicles how Israel came to be separated from the land promised to them by God because they had separated themselves from God by their sinfulness. The worst part of their homesickness is this alienation from God and the knowledge that they have no one to blame for it but themselves.

God wants nothing more than to be close to us and share himself with us. But we don't always let God come close. Sometimes we prefer to distance ourselves from him by doing things that may give us pleasure for a short time, but ultimately leave us empty, dissatisfied, and damaged. Then we become ashamed, and we try to run from God. As our Gospel reading says, “And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed.” The farther we sink into sin, the more we try to hide in the darkness and the deeper into sin we fall.

But however bad our sins may be, God never gives up on us. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.” God always leaves the light of his love burning for us so that we can find our way back to him. That light is Christ himself who came into the world to seek us out and to bring us home. May God help us to trust his love, leave behind our guilt, and come into the light. Then we will be able to joyfully sing the songs of Zion in the New Jerusalem that is to come.

Blessings,
Fr. Scott