

Please pray with me: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

“When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, you shall make this response before the Lord your God: ‘A wandering Aramean was **my** ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated **us** harshly and afflicted **us**, by imposing hard labor on **us**, **we** cried to the Lord, the God of **our** ancestors; the Lord heard **our** voice and saw **our** affliction, **our** toil, and **our** oppression. The Lord brought **us** out

of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought **us** into this place and gave **us** this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now **I** bring the first of the fruit of the ground that **you**, O Lord, have given **me**”

I start today by re-telling this piece of our Old Testament text from the day's lectionary, not simply to take up more of your time this morning, I promise. I re-share this with you because it demonstrates why I love liturgy and worship, that is, what we're doing here together as the church. It demonstrates what I believe is one of our most precious jobs as the church; telling the story. Today

(and every day's) lessons are an invitation into the great story - the story of God and God's people - the eternal story brought to life in Christ Jesus.

The process of telling and retelling our story, as demonstrated both in the instructions here in Deuteronomy and in Jesus' response to the trials of the devil, is an invitation to return to God for our sustenance, inspiration, and salvation. This is needed now, in these troubled times, as it has in troubled times before.

In fact, when Jesus himself is put to the test, he turns to the story of God and God's people as revealed to his community in the Hebrew scriptures. He demonstrates an understanding of one's

relationship to scripture as the basis of our shared faith and history, not as the place we can pull 'gotcha' quotes from to hurl at one another as weapons. When the devil uses one of these weaponized scriptures in his attempt to make Jesus test the Lord, Jesus, who is the Word embodied, cannot be manipulated or led astray because his being is inseparable from the Word, in simplest terms: He cannot be used against himself. For us, who are not the Word but who can know the Word and are shaping our lives by the Word, additional action is required to become storytellers in God's magnificent tale, that is, to become truth-tellers.

This work is essential because it is how we come to know ourselves and discern

the paths laid before us, some of which might be hard to see or trickier than we would prefer. Without this work, we are left in the dark, unable to know our past and thus unable to see what our next faithful step could be. It is hard to know what we are being called to do as people of God in the here and now if we do not know ourselves, and it is impossible to know ourselves without knowing the stories that have formed us into the people of God. The story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, his baptism, which just preceded it, or his rejection in his hometown of Nazareth, which comes next. The story of Moses' sermon before the entrance to the promised land, which we see in Deuteronomy, the years of trials in the wilderness that precede it, or

Moses' death, which follows. These are pieces of the story that we, as Christ followers, let sink into our bones and cover our skin and, hopefully, pour out from us and into the lives of the people we encounter inside and outside of these walls.

Now this is the part in many a Lent 1 sermon where the preacher often turns toward a pitch for their favorite discipline or spiritual practice, and I bet you cannot begin to guess that mine is about knowing the stories!! Truly though, I cannot express to you how truly the words of our scriptures and the Word we know as Jesus Christ work in each of us and deserve our time and attention. So, if you happen to have come to church today

hoping for a little something more, here is my hope for you in this season. Learn one biblical story this Lent. It could be one you vaguely remember liking as a child and have meant to revisit. It could be a bit of a book you've never turned to before. If you are sitting here as a biblical scholar, which I know we have here at Resurrection, maybe find a more challenging text that you want to understand in a new way. If you are sitting here intimidated by the Bible, you are not alone, and I promise it counts to learn even a single line by heart. These are all valid ways to approach a next faithful step in your walk with the holy scriptures. And friends, if you're really and truly stuck, do not be afraid! If you want your very own prompt, I have written down many of my favorite

scripture stories and where to find them. After the service, find me in the parish hall and we can let the Holy Spirit decide which story you're meant to know in your heart this Lent.

Beloveds, these stories have shaped each of us individually and all of us collectively into the Body of Christ and into the assembly of Christ's followers called the Church of the Resurrection. Let us know them, let us tell them, let us become them in the hope of a faithful next step.

Amen.