

March 12, 2021

Text: Matthew 11:20-22

Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgement than for you."

Devotion: Ali Haberling

Yikes; when I read the text for today's devotion I went through a series of thoughts and emotions. At first, I was startled and taken aback at the level of anger from Jesus toward the people from these towns in this passage. Most of the passages or themes from the Bible that are preached on or written about have at least a slightly loving tone and ultimately a grace-filled ending. There seems to be no grace around this passage for the towns that Jesus was addressing, and that scared me a bit for what this devotion's message would end up being.

Next, I started thinking about how America feels like a modern-day version of one of these unrepentant towns. We have industries built on selling blatantly sinful products that are thriving, an accepted and warped view on individualistic morality, and Christians who are complacent in their faith walks and service to the church. We are in desperate need of some reflection and repentance in our society today. When writing my first draft of this devotion, I was in this emotional stage of processing the passage and I have to admit, it was looking to be a pretty harsh message.

Finally, I was reminded by my very wise parents that grace wins at the end of the day. Somehow, despite all our sinful, unrepentant ways, Jesus chooses us to be His inheritance. Chooses to become man, walk among this broken world, and die a gruesome death, all for the salvation of our lowly, undeserving selves.

And that's the beauty of the Lenten season: we are brought down to reflect on the very worst of our sinful selves. To be accurately compared with Chorazin's and Bethsaida's unrepentant attitudes. To remember that we are the ones yelling "crucify him" and nailing him to the cross. All so that we can be elevated Easter morning by God's grace. A grace that gives us hope for the ultimate reunion with our Creator, away from the temptations and distractions of this sinful world.

Brothers and sisters, woe to us, but thanks be to God!