

Lenten Reflection
The Beloved Community
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Scripture: Isaiah 11: 1-9 (NRSV)

*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.
The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.
They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.*

Reflection:

During the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King Jr took a phrase that had existed for some time, "the Beloved Community", and expanded its meaning. The Beloved Community is an attainable vision of God's Kingdom coming to dwell on earth now.

In the Beloved Community, all humanity can share wealth and resources. Not to be confused with political ideologies, the Beloved Community is a vision of Community as God has laid it out in Holy Scriptures, where hunger, poverty, and homelessness are no longer tolerated or considered to be normative. In the Beloved Community we have respect for our fellow humans, not simply those who are like us in terms of class or race.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the Beloved Community is that conflict still exists, however, it is resolved in peaceful and non-violent ways. Violence would be sought in absolutely no circumstances. The root of this type of community is the agape love of God, which seeks goodwill for all. This type of love isn't based on conditions, instead people are loved not for what they produce, but rather simply because they are a child of God.

Reflection Questions:

- How does Isaiah 11: 1-9 reflect the Beloved Community? What is God's vision for community?
- Do you believe the Beloved Community is possible? Why or why not?
- How can we embody the Beloved Community as the Church?
- How are the concepts of justice and the Beloved Community intertwined?

For Lent:

Lent is often viewed as a time of personal connection to God, through disciplines such as fasting and prayer. However, Lent is also meant to be a time of growth within the faith community, through disciplines such as almsgiving and acts of service. Neither individual or communal practices can be practiced without the other - we need both in order to be whole. **What are some ways you can practice the Beloved Community by yourself and with others through the Lenten season? How can you use this concept to grow deeper in your relationship with God and others?**

Resource:

The King Center. <http://www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy#sub4>.