

Saturday after Ash Wednesday, February 25, 2023

Recommended reading: pp. xxviii-xxxiii, "Origins" (part three)

Acknowledging the criticism that this book has received, Nikole Hannah-Jones writes, "If we are a truly great nation, the truth cannot destroy us. On the contrary, facing the truth liberates us to build the society we wish to be. One of the criticisms of the project is that we focus too much on the brutality of slavery and our nation's legacy of anti-Blackness. But just as central to the history we are highlighting is the way that Black Americans have managed, out of the most inhumane circumstances, to make an indelible impact on the United States, serving as its most ardent freedom fighters and forgers of culture. The enslaved and their descendants played a central role in shaping our institutions, our intellectual traditions, our music, art, and literature, our very democracy."

Jesus said to them, "Why do I speak to you at all? I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me. And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him." As he was saying these things, many believed in him. Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:25b-32)

As Americans, we value our freedom, but we identify freedom as the right to do whatever we want. The Savior who could condemn us for our sinful choices and attitudes chooses instead to suffer and die in order to free us from the power of our sinful compulsion. The Father who is Truth itself sent the Son to guide us into a truth that frees us to love and serve our neighbor. We must never be afraid of speaking the truth or of hearing it, because is it only truth that sets us free.

Prayer

God of self-sacrificing love, we are humbled that so many of the people who were denied the benefits of freedom were willing to suffer and die to preserve that freedom; we are blessed that you empowered them to turn their suffering into things of beauty that are enjoyed all over the world. Help us all to acknowledge the truths of the past, so that we can embrace the truth of your future for us. Amen.