

## **Thursday after the Second Sunday in Lent, March 9, 2023**

Recommended readings: p. 272, "September 15, 1883;" p. 273, "no car for colored [+]  
ladies...;" and pp. 276-283, "Punishment"

On page 277, Bryan Stevenson writes that, in 2008, the Equal Justice Initiative "established that all of the thirteen- and fourteen-year-old children in this country sentenced to life in prison without parole for non-homicide offenses were Black, Latino, or Native. We began representing these children and challenging what we call 'death in prison' sentences across the country. Eventually, two of the cases...ended up in the Supreme Court. In 2009, I argued to the justices that telling any thirteen-year-old child, 'You are fit only to die in prison' is cruel and that these sentences cannot be reconciled with what we know about child development or basic human rights. The Court agreed and declared that life without parole sentences imposed on children convicted of non-homicide offenses are unconstitutional."

*Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them. (Isaiah 42:5-9)*

It's hard to imagine that our nation is a place in which it is necessary "to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness." It is tempting to try and ignore the injustices that are widespread in our system of justice. But God has called us to be the champions of a justice that seeks health and wholeness for both victims and perpetrators. We are called to embody the unconditional love of God and God's belief that all people are deserving of abundant life.

### **Prayer**

God of mercy and truth, help us turn from our old practices of retribution for wrong-doing and prefer a restorative form of justice that can breathe new life into our nation and its citizens. Open our eyes to see the injustice experienced by our neighbor, that we might walk with them into the light of your love. Amen.