

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 25, 2023

Recommended readings: p. 328, "February 1, 1960," pp. 329-332, "From Behind..." pp. 346-353, "Church (part two)

Anthea Butler describes the continuing influence of the Black church in America. "That deep love accompanied by deep disappointment is what drives the Black church today, and leaders such as Senator Warnock continue to carry forward the tradition of speaking truth to power in the Black church. Others have eschewed the formal Black church tradition and have looked to Black Lives Matter, Color of Change, and other social-justice movements to call America's failings to account. Yet the Black church remains the prophetic voice of condemnation of America's ills. As King so aptly stated in his 'I Have a Dream' speech, 'America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds.'" The Black church, pastors and members alike, is still demanding to cash the check of true democracy and freedom."

Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." (Mark 12:17)

Can deep love and deep disappointment co-exist within the human heart? Ask any parent and they will affirm this truth. In fact, perhaps it is the depth of love which fuels the disappointment when great hopes and expectations go unfulfilled. Patriotism need not blind us to the hard truths of history. We can love our country even while confessing our national sins of slavery and racism. In fact, perhaps it is only in this confession that we can truly love our country, for doesn't every parent only want the best for their child? Doesn't every parent hope their child will be true to their best ideals? As people of faith who are also Americans, we can, we must honestly acknowledge where we have sinned and work for a better future.

Prayer

Lord of justice and love, may we never overlook or excuse our participation in the national sin of racism. Let the fires of your Spirit cleanse us and refine us so that we may, through that same Spirit, truly love each other as you loved us. Amen.