

Saturday after the Third Sunday in Lent, March 18, 2023

Recommended readings: p. 214, "Sept 18, 1850," pp. 215-217, "A Letter..." pp. 229-236, "Citizenship" (part two)

Martha S. Jones concludes her account of the fight for citizenship among Black Americans: "When the 1869 National Convention of the Colored Men of America met in Washington, D.C. [it included] Frederick Douglass, who was fifty-one years but had been recognized as a citizen for only five months by the new Fourteenth Amendment.... Delegates knew that while a guarantee of citizenship was a milestone, they would need to breathe new meaning into their new status.... While the Civil War and Reconstruction seemed to establish the unassailable belonging of Black Americans, persistent discrimination and organized violence required that they exercise renewed vigilance.... The colored conventions continued their work into the last decade of the nineteenth century.... Delegates stood firm in their belief that they were full and equal citizens before the Constitution. They decried the outrages of the day, including the rise of lynching. They were again among the despised. But now, as citizens, they were more fully equipped to demand that the nation live up to its ideals."

Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. (Philippians 3:17-21)

The churches founded and ministered to by the apostle Paul were diverse communities of people from all cultures and economic classes, all of them living under the military and economic oppression of the Roman Empire. Paul encouraged people to turn away from the greed and violence of the Empire and to base their lives on the values of heaven—the place where they held true citizenship. In a democratic society, we can celebrate our citizenship best by working to include more people in the blessings of liberty.

Prayer

God of life, we thank you for bringing life out of death and glory out of humiliation. Guide us to ease the suffering and humiliation of our fellow citizens on earth and to fully embody our citizenship in heaven. Amen.