

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 22, 2023

Recommended readings: p. 288, "May 31, 1921," pp. 289-291, "Greenwood," pp. 294-305, "Inheritance"

In chapter eleven, Trymaine Lee describes a "social and political campaign to violently safeguard the racial hierarchy" after Reconstruction. "Elmore Bolling was a one-man economy in Lowndesboro [Alabama, with] a general store, a delivery service, a catering company, and a gas station... It seemed that in buying a pump and selling gas, Elmore had stepped over some invisible line.... The white men shot Elmore seven times... His murder created a gaping wound in the family, which quickly lost everything he had built... 'There was no inheritance...nothing for my father to pass down, because it was all taken away.' ...For most Black citizens, passing down a more substantial financial inheritance or a business such as the one Elmore Bolling was building when he was killed has been—and remains—a dream out of reach. Instead of wealth, millions of Black families have passed down something else from one generation to the next: the mental and emotional stress that results from the constant threat of white violence and financial insecurity."

Troubles multiply for those who chase after other gods. I will not take part in their sacrifices of blood or even speak the names of their gods. Lord, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing. You guard all that is mine. (Psalm 16:5 New Living Translation)

What is the legacy you hope to leave to future generations? Financial security? A foundation of faith? Strength of character? These aspirations seem to be universal – most people hope to leave the world a better place than they found it. And for people of privilege, it is, if not always easy, often attainable. But for those who have been continuously victimized, generation after generation, what can they hope to leave for their children? This is why the church is so important to Black communities. There, they can find common ground, people who understand because they have endured. People who claim God as their inheritance and the source of their blessing and security. And while it is comforting to all people of faith to cling to God, do we dare rest in that comfort when our sisters and brothers of color are still denied their other inheritances, inheritances of secure wealth and emotional wellness?

Prayer

Lord, while we enjoy the inheritance of faith that has been handed down to us, may we never cease to be uncomfortable with the inequities and violations that have been perpetrated against our brothers and sisters of color. Amen.