



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost, October 11, 2020

Don't Forget the Bridge that Brought You Over

by Garland F. Pierce

Exodus 32:1-14

32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

32:2 Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

32:3 So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

32:4 He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

32:5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the LORD."

32:6 They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

32:7 The LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely;

32:8 they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'"

32:9 The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are.

32:10 Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of

you I will make a great nation."

32:11 But Moses implored the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?"

32:12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people.

32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

32:14 And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

Have you ever helped someone, time passes, and that same person credits themselves or worse yet someone else as the one who gave the help? If you have, then you may understand a bit how Moses and more importantly God must have felt. It was not as if God had not shared through the messenger and their leader, Moses, just how God felt about such things, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." In other words, "I am the LORD your God; Moses is my messenger and your leader. Don't forget or substitute the bridge that brought you over!"

Yet, when the people felt that Moses had been gone too long, they demanded of Aaron that he lead them in a process of making gods for themselves—gods that would "lead" them to the Promised Land. They substituted God with a calf of their own making and Moses with Aaron, a leader who would do what they asked and say what they wanted to hear. Their memory was short, their vision limited, their expectations questionable, their loyalties wanting, and their devotion misdirected. They were quick to forget and give up on the Lord their God and God's messenger, their leader, Moses.

Forgetting the journey which lies behind is dangerous; miracles are dwarfed into coincidences, faithful leaders become strangers, and God, the Creator and Liberator, becomes something to be created by our hands and in our image. Uncalled leaders and human-made gods will fail. Following them can lead to our peril. For reasons not always clear to us or others, we still forget and make substitutions. Thankfully, God-chosen leaders and those who love us intercede on our behalf and save us from ourselves.

Thou shalt not forget the bridge that brought you over! Lord, have mercy upon us; and, incline our hearts to keep this law.

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—When have you forgotten and made substitutions for God or for the leader(s) God sent to you?

PRAY:

Confession is not an easy or a pleasant thing to do.
We would like to think that we have been good and faithful disciples,
following your way.
But we know in our hearts the many ways in which
we have turned our backs on you and rejected your will for us.
Like the people in the wilderness,
we create for ourselves idols and worship them,
only to discover their shallowness and emptiness for our lives.
And we wonder what went wrong.
Stop us in our tracks, O Lord.
Help us to be open to your will for our lives.
We know what you want us to do.
Give us the persistence and the courage to do your will.
Heal us from our wayward actions and attitudes.
Remind us that we must reach out to others in compassion and peace.
Merciful God, come to us this day with your healing power
and help us again to be your disciples,
offering hope and peace to your hurting and wounded world.
In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

From: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/09/confession-exodus-32-1-14.html>

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section and knowing that someone has interceded for you when you have been wrong, misguided or weak and in need, who needs you to intercede for them right now. How will you do so? For those US citizens, here are some practical actions to take that have the potential to help others and yourself: Participate in the current democratic processes (voter registration, voting, completing the 2020 census (**CENSUS DEADLINE EXTENDED**) and encouraging others to do so—See: <http://www.amev-alert.org> and <https://2020census.gov>.) For everyone, we can help others and ourselves by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing our hands often, and wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.
2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.
3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Song:

Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult
AMEC Hymnal, #238

1. Je-sus calls us over the tu-mult
of our life's wild, rest-less sea;
Day by day His sweet voice sound-eth,
Say-ing, "Chris-tian, fol-low Me!"

2. Je-sus calls us from the wor-ship
Of the vain world's gold-en store,
From each i-dol that would keep us,
Say-ing, "Chris-tian, love Me more!"
3. In our joys and in our sor-rows,
Days of toil and hours of ease,
Still He calls, in cares and plea-sures,
"Chris-tian, love Me more than these!"
4. Je-sus calls us! by Thy mer-cies, Sav-ior,
May we hear Thy call,
Give our hearts to Thine o-be-dience,
Serve and love Thee best of all!

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.