

Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor

October 31, 2021

Lesson 9

Title: Covenant Renewal

Text: Deuteronomy 29:10-29

Do you know how many whiskers the average cat has on its muzzle? (Twelve on each side)

What does the word “chiliad” mean? (A group of 1,000)

How old was William Shakespeare when he died? (52 years old) For that matter, how tall was he? (6 feet, 4 inches)

Can you tell that I am stalling? This week’s text spells out what would happen if God’s people broke their covenant (Deuteronomy 29:22-28). Moses was trying to call the people to renew the bonds they had with God, for example, when God led them out of Egypt’s captivity (verse 16). Moses knew that some people would act as though their relationship with God was in good shape, even though they had adopted other gods (verses 18-19).

I guess I am stalling because Moses’ challenge is just as appropriate in this year as it was when he first spoke it. God doesn’t mess around with folks who ignore the covenant, the agreement, with God. Renewing the covenant is as critical today as it was then, and I don’t have to look beyond my zip code to find evidence of our violating the divine covenant. (In fact, there are days I don’t have to look beyond a house numbered 8809.)

I have been to services of baptismal renewal. I have been to services of marriage renewal. I have been to services of conversion renewal. What these services have in common is an admission that these covenants have not been lived out perfectly, but “we agree to start again.”

This difficult passage in Deuteronomy is a clear reminder that we are not to take for granted the grace God extends to us. Maybe I stall because I do not want to face that reality, but that very grace is offered by God who invites us to come out of our brokenness to renew the covenant that offers us the Promised Land.

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Holy God, you have moved me from the captive places of my life; help me stay away from them that I might live in the Promised Land.”

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