

Tuesday, June 16th

Read

Exodus, Chapter 10

Reflect

The Emperor Has No Clothes

Do you remember that Hans Christian Andersen fable, “The Emperor’s New Clothes”? In it, two swindlers capitalize on the pride and insecurity of a king and his servants. They tell their lie so boldly that it seems more plausible than the truth. Such is the persistent power of falsehood. In John 8:44, Jesus says that the devil is “the father of lies.” It’s a warning to everyone that much of life is spent sifting truth from falsehood.

Pharaoh lives a lie to such an extent that he comes to believe it himself. He acts as if he is a god. He refuses Moses’ appeals that the Israelites be allowed to worship their true God. This lie, like many others, is so offensive that it cannot be allowed to stand. So, God continues this plague-filled showdown with the pretender. God “hardens” Pharaoh’s heart, which you may take to mean, “God gives Pharaoh the guts to follow through on what he really believes.” Pharaoh and his lie must be undressed and revealed for all its folly. Pharaoh must be defeated.

This event stands at the heart of Israel’s faith, and ours. The central confession Israel made after the Exodus was, “Hear, O Israel, the LORD is God, the LORD alone. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

Don’t think that each one of us isn’t tempted by other gods. Don’t imagine that there won’t be showdowns in which God is determined to defeat other pretenders to his throne – the throne within each human heart, and the throne of heaven and earth. Are we in such a moment? I can’t know for sure. I do know that God will accomplish what he intends, and that it will mean release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, the oppressed set free in mind, body, and spirit.

Pray

LORD God, in Jesus Christ you conquered sin and death, inaugurating a new age on earth. Give to us such confidence in your gracious rule that we hate what is evil and love what is good, returning no one evil for evil, but striving to outdo one another in showing honor, through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

