

Promptings: A Nose Hook and Shackles

Scripture Reading — 2 Chronicles 33:1-13

*He sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly ...
2 Chronicles 33:12 —*

This is a remarkable story—about God. It’s hard to imagine a more anti-God person than Manasseh. Even though he was raised by a godly father, Manasseh not only rejected God but tried to wipe out the memory of God everywhere, replacing every part of God-worship in his kingdom with heathenism. From rebuilding pagan shrines to sacrificing his own sons in the fire, this man was bullish on every god except for the true God. He even desecrated the temple, Israel’s holiest place, by filling it with altars to foreign gods. You might think that God would have written him off—and soon.

Instead, God showed his covenant-keeping grace: he loved even a rebel like Manasseh. When I think of how Manasseh treated God, and God’s response, I’m reminded of Edwin Markham’s poem, in which God says,

He drew a circle that shut me out: rebel, heretic, a thing to flout.

But love and I had the wit to win; we drew a circle that took him in.

But that circle had teeth. God used the crushing power of Assyria to bring proud Manasseh to his knees. It took the humiliation of a hook through his nose and the cutting pain of bronze shackles to lead Manasseh home—the long way around. Sometimes God’s mercy is severe. But it can move us to finally seek him.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for the times you mercifully brought me to the end of my resources. Thank you that even deeper than such terrors are your waiting arms. In Jesus’s name, Amen

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