

*Daily Morning Message*

*St Paul United Church of Christ*

*5312 Old Blue Rock Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45247*

*Allen M Fluent, Pastor*

*Friday, March 5, 2021*

Daily Lectionary Readings

Psalm 19  
Exodus 19:9b-15  
Acts 7

Today's Scripture Verse:

*You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. (Acts 7:51)*

What it means:

The lectionary reading today includes only vss 30-40 in Acts 7, but I've included the whole chapter, because it is hard to get the sense without reading it all. This is the final sermon spoken by Stephen to a religious council in Jerusalem. It provoked them to stone him, making him the first Christian martyr. The sermon is harshly critical of the Jewish people, and can mislead modern readers by causing them to think that "the Jews" as a whole rejected Jesus. But of course this is not true. Jesus and all of his early followers, including Stephen, were Jewish. Stephen is making his angry critique from the inside of the community, not from the outside; and it is important to note that he is using the Jewish Scriptures, which include passages of self-criticism, as the basis for his argument. Religious people in any age take offense at having their history described harshly; and Stephen is not subtle. We should ask ourselves when reading this passage how our Christian history might be described by a harsh critic like Stephen today.

Our time of reflection:

What do you think? Do Christians sometimes exaggerate their positive qualities and cover up the times we have deviated from the teachings of our faith? The Lenten season is a good time for us to think about times when false pride has gotten in the way of honest assessment of the wrongs we have committed while proclaiming the Gospel of love.

