

Sunday, March 13, 2022 – Second Sunday in Lent

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Introduction

Though we sometimes doubt and often resist God's desire to protect and save us, our God persists. In holy baptism, God's people have been called and gathered into a God-initiated relationship that will endure. Lent provides the church with a time and a tradition in which to seek God's face again. Lent provides another occasion to behold the God of our salvation in the face of the Blessed One who "comes in the name of the Lord."

Prayer of the Day

God of the covenant, in the mystery of the cross you promise everlasting life to the world. Gather all peoples into your arms, and shelter us with your mercy, that we may rejoice in the life we share in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

God promises a childless and doubting Abram that he will have a child, that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars, and that the land of Canaan will be their inheritance. Abram's trust in God is sealed with a covenant-making ceremony, a sign of God's promise.

¹After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ²But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." ⁴But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." ⁵He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ⁶And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

⁷Then he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." ⁸But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" ⁹He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. ¹¹And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹²As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.

¹⁷When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates."

Psalm 27

¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom then | shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I | be afraid?

²**When evildoers close in against me to de- | vour my flesh,
they, my foes and my enemies, will stum- | ble and fall.**

³Though an army encamp against me, my heart | will not fear.
Though war rise up against me, my trust will | not be shaken.

⁴**One thing I ask of the LORD; one | thing I seek;
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life; to gaze upon the
beauty of the LORD and to seek God | in the temple.**

⁵For in the day of trouble God will | give me shelter,
hide me in the hidden places of the sanctuary, and raise me high up- | on a rock.

⁶**Even now my head is lifted up above my enemies | who surround me.
Therefore I will offer sacrifice in the sanctuary, sacrifices of rejoicing; I will sing
and make music | to the LORD.**

⁷Hear my voice, O LORD, | when I call;
have mercy on me and | answer me.

⁸**My heart speaks your message— | “Seek my face.”
Your face, O LORD, | I will seek.**

⁹Hide not your face from me, turn not away from your ser- | vant in anger.
Cast me not away—you have been my helper; forsake me not, O God of | my salvation.

¹⁰**Though my father and my moth- | er forsake me,
the LORD will | take me in.**

¹¹Teach me your | way, O LORD;
lead me on a level path, because of | my oppressors.

¹²**Subject me not to the will | of my foes,
for they rise up against me, false witnesses | breathing violence.**

¹³This I believe—that I will see the goodness | of the LORD
in the land | of the living!

¹⁴**Wait for the LORD| and be strong.
Take heart and wait | for the LORD!**

Second Reading: Philippians 3:17--4:1

Although Paul's devotion to Christ has caused him to be persecuted, he does not regret the course he has taken. Writing from prison, he expresses confidence in a glorious future and encourages other Christians to follow in his footsteps.

¹⁷Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. ¹⁹Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

^{4:1}Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Gospel Reading: Luke 13:31-35

Neither Herod's plotting nor Jerusalem's resistance to maternal love will deter Jesus from his sacrificial mission.

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to [Jesus,] "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³²He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Prayers of Intercession

Drawn close to the heart of God, we offer these prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need, saying “Merciful God,” and responding, “receive our prayer.”

A brief silence.

You gather the church into a community of mercy and grace. Unify Christians around the globe in efforts to proclaim good news even in the face of opposition and to protect those whose lives are imperilled by the gospel. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You create the entire universe and call it good. Hinder those who would cause further destruction to our planet’s fragile ecosystems, and augment the calls of those who advocate for thoughtful stewardship of the earth’s resources. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You raise up leaders committed to love and justice. Nurture in those who govern patience to receive criticism, openness to new ideas, and courage to change course when needed for the sake of the common good. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You hear us when we cry to you. Attend to those expecting a child, and console those who have experienced miscarriage. Comfort veterans enduring post-traumatic stress. Shield those endangered by domestic violence. Uphold those who are ill or grieving (*especially those who we name now, aloud, or silently on our hearts...*). Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You kindle faith that moves us into action. Guide children and adults preparing for baptism or confirmation. Empower Sunday school teachers, confirmation leaders, and parents who share their faith with younger generations. Give us all a renewed sense of vocation. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You welcome us into your heavenly realm. We give thanks for those whose labours on earth are ended and who now rest with you. On the final day, gather all of us, with them, in your loving arms. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Accept the prayers we bring, O God, on behalf of a world in need, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

A reflection for the Second Sunday in Lent...

Purpose and Perseverance

This week's gospel text from Luke presents another temptation for Jesus. The Pharisees approach Jesus with a warning about his safety, telling him to "get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you" (Luke 13:31). Not only do the Pharisees want Jesus to leave, but one can assume they also want Jesus to stop doing what he was doing: speaking against the Pharisees, teaching about God, and healing on the sabbath. We know the Pharisees are "very hostile" (Luke 11:53) toward Jesus, so we can conclude that their warning is not a genuine expression of concern but rather an attempt to stop his mission and ministry.

However, Jesus will not be distracted or turned away from his purpose, even if that includes moving toward his own death in Jerusalem. In Jesus' ability to fulfill his purpose, even in the midst of opposition, we find inspiration as we seek to live our lives in concert with God's purposes. As Christians, Jesus' purpose is our purpose. The church, the body of Christ, doesn't exist for itself. Rather, the church exists to be a partner with God in God's mission to love, bless, and reconcile the world.

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