

Sunday, February 25, 2024, Second Sunday in Lent

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Introduction

The second covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the one made with Abraham and Sarah: God's promise to make them the ancestors of many, with whom God will remain in everlasting covenant. Paul says this promise comes to all who share Abraham's faith in the God who brings life into being where there was no life. We receive this baptismal promise of resurrection life in faith. Sarah and Abraham receive new names as a sign of the covenant, and we too get new identities in baptism, as we put on Christ.

Prayer of the Day

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life. Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." ³Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."

¹⁵God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Psalm 22:23-31

²³You who fear the LORD, give praise! All you of Jacob's ^l line, give glory.

Stand in awe of the LORD, all you off- ^l spring of Israel.

²⁴**For the LORD does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty; neither is the LORD's face hid- ^l den from them;**

but when they cry out, ^l the LORD hears them.

²⁵From you comes my praise in the ^l great assembly;

I will perform my vows in the sight of those who ^l fear the LORD.

- ²⁶**The poor shall eat ^l and be satisfied,
Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts ^l live forever!**
- ²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn ^l to the LORD;
all the families of nations shall bow ^l before God.
- ²⁸**For dominion belongs ^l to the LORD,
who rules o- ^l ver the nations.**
- ²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow ^l down in worship;
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel be- ^l fore the LORD.
- ³⁰**Their descendants shall ^l serve the LORD,
whom they shall proclaim to genera- ^l tions to come.**
- ³¹They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people ^l yet unborn,
saying to them, "The ^l LORD has acted!"

Second Reading: Romans 4:13-25

¹³The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness." ²³Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Gospel: Mark 8:31-38

³¹[Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my

followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Prayers and introductions from
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Prayers of Intercession

Trusting in God's promise to reconcile all things, let us pray for the church, the well-being of creation, and a world in need.

A brief silence.

We turn to you for meaning, holy God. Nurture in your children the gifts of the Spirit poured out in baptism and let the mind of Christ guide the church. Give wisdom and discernment to our bishops, pastors, deacons, teachers, and leaders. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We turn to you for renewal. Save lives and ecosystems threatened by pollution and a changing climate. Cleanse the earth's waters and restore the soil. Preserve rainforests, deserts, and wildlife, that generations to come may cherish your creation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We turn to you for justice. Uphold the worth and dignity of every person, especially any who experience hatred and rejection because of gender, ability, sexual orientation, color, ethnicity, or religion. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We turn to you for healing. Send compassionate helpers to any who suffer because of war and violence. Shelter unhoused people, befriend those who are lonely, bring hope to any in despair, and console the bereaved. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We turn to you for purpose. Remind us of your faithfulness to this congregation. Increase our trust in your guidance and keep us near the cross. Grant that our acts of service will express Christ's sacrificial love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We turn to you for peace. We honor the saints who lived in service to others (*especially Elizabeth Fedde, deaconess, whom we commemorate today*). Inspire us by their example until you gather us into your kingdom. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

A reflection for this Second Sunday in Lent

Promises, Promises

The story of God's relationship with God's people is a story of promises fulfilled. We hear about God's covenant with Sarah and Abraham in today's Genesis reading and about its fulfillment in the New Testament texts. As Paul reminds us in Romans, we are the multitude of nations that were promised to Abraham; we are his descendants in faith. "Kings of peoples" (Gen. 17:16) descended from Sarah's offspring; Jesus Christ, the King of kings, is Lord of all through his death and resurrection.

From generation to generation, God is steadfast. No matter how many ages pass or how often we turn away, God remains faithful. This is the great hope of our faith—no matter how often we stray or how great our sin, God persists in loving us. Jesus Christ binds us to God through our baptism into his death. In worship—especially through confession, affirmation of baptism, and communion—we continually remember the lengths to which God goes to keep covenant with us. The promise of salvation extends even into the future, as the psalmist reminds us: Our children and our children's children will proclaim God's salvation to generations yet unborn.



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