

**SERMON – Lent 2 – Feb. 28, 2010**

**Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18**

**Psalm 27**

**Philippians 3:17-4:1**

**Luke 13:31-35**

Lent is a season of quiet; it is a time to wander in the desert to make our souls ready for the new life that will be offered to us at Jesus' resurrection. Lent also allows us to walk with Jesus as he faces what is going to happen to him in Jerusalem, a time to watch and pray with Jesus in his darkest hour. No matter where each of us are during these 40 days of Lent, the Scripture lessons today assure us that God loves and cares for us through our pain and joy, and they show us what it is to have faith and trust in God.

We see God's love for Abram as God tells him, "*Do not be afraid, I am your shield.*" God is assuring Abram, that even at his very old age he would have descendants as vast as the stars in the heavens. I wonder if Abram said under his breath, '*Yea, right, I am going to have heirs at my age, come on Lord, be for real!*' But in spite of any thoughts he may have had, Abram believed God. The whole Abram story in Genesis is about faith and trust. We will remember that God told Abram to leave his country and go to another country which God would show him, and he gave up everything to obey God. God told Abram that he would have many descendants, and this is the story we heard today; when Isaac was finally born to Abram, God told him to take his only child to a place where he would show him to sacrifice him as a burnt offering, and Abram again obeyed God; and we know the outcome of that story. Through all of these significant incidences in Abram's life, he believed and trusted God – Abram's faith was very strong.

How does our faith and trust in God compare to Abram's faith and trust in God? Should we even be comparing them? Is this something for us to think about during this Lenten season? Are we hearing God's voice calling us to do something that we do not want to do? How obedient and trusting are we to God's commands? As we ask ourselves all these questions, let us remember God's words to Abram, because they also apply to us, "*Do not be afraid, I am your shield.*"

The opening verse of Psalm 27 echoes Abram's total trust in God. *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?"* This psalm shows how God offers help for today and hope for the future. It says that no matter what happens to us, we should always put our trust in God. Waiting on God to act in our lives is not easy; sometimes we feel that God has abandoned us and the last verse of the psalm calls us *"To tarry and await the Lord's pleasure; be strong, and he shall comfort our heart, wait patiently for the Lord."* In this day of wanting things to happen immediately, waiting on God is going to be very hard, because we know that God works in His own time, not ours. Just think, if we want God to give us what we want **now**, then that means we are taking the control away from God. Don't we think that God is worth waiting for? Waiting on God gives us time to be refreshed and to be renewed, and whatever our situation is, it usually works out better having waited in God's time.

Reading the Psalms can be a good Lenten discipline; they are a collection of songs and prayers expressing the heart and soul of humanity, and there is nothing hidden in the psalms. The psalms speak of the whole range of our human experiences, sins are confessed, doubts and fears are expressed, God's help in times of trouble is sought and God is praised and worshipped. We could do a whole sermon on the psalms.

We know that it is not always easy to do the right thing and even though in our hearts we want to follow the ways of Christ, we know that our heads can lead us in another direction. Paul is reminding the Christian community in Philippi that it is *important to stand firm in the Lord*. It is not good enough to claim to be Christians if all we do is satisfy our own desires. By using Christ as our model we can learn to love each other, we can learn to be compassionate and we can learn to serve others. So when we have all sorts of things distracting us from God, let us remember *to stand firm in the Lord*.

The gospel, the 'good news of Jesus Christ' reassures us of the love that God has for all God's children, and we see this very clearly in the gospel reading for today.

Jesus is lamenting over all the unjust things that are happening in Jerusalem and he is being threatened by Herod, whom he calls 'The fox', but we see that Jesus stands firm and sends a message to Herod that he is about

God's business, he has important things to do, and Jesus will not be deterred by Herod. This little story right in the middle of Luke's gospel gives us an image of sacrificial love, of God's love for all of us, the image of a mother hen wanting to protect her little chicks from 'the foxes' of the world. I think that all parents can identify with this mother hen image; how we want so desperately to gather our loved ones under our wings so that no evil gets to them.

God's passionate dream is for God to gather all of us closer and closer so that He can embrace and love us. *That* is the center of Jesus' mission here on earth, to bring us all closer to God. God, The Mother Hen, wants to draw, embrace, include and welcome each and every one of us into the family of humanity. Yes, that means you and you and you, and me, none of us are left out; we are all to be gathered under the love and care of God through his Son, Jesus Christ.

We see this drawing and embracing of all God's children as we carry on the mission of Jesus Christ here at Trinity. We are to feed the hungry, visit the sick, clothe the naked, counsel the doubter, comfort the sorrowful, give drink to the thirsty, and instruct the ignorant, and when we gather each Sunday morning to learn, to worship God, to hear God's Word, to sing praises to God, to come to the Altar to be fed, to have fellowship with one another, then we are able to go out into the world to love and serve the Lord; this is how the mission of Jesus is carried on.

As we continue to walk with Jesus into Jerusalem and eventually to the Cross, I would urge us to nourish our souls so that we stand firm in the Lord. We are offering many programs to help us during Lent; if we check the bulletin we will see that there are programs on Sundays and Wednesdays to help us along the way. We also have a new Prayer group being formed and a Spiritual Reading group that meets each week. As we strengthen ourselves in prayer and study we nourish our souls to better trust in God when the bad times hit us; we nourish our souls to have hope that things will get better, and we nourish our souls to have faith.

As we leave here today assured of God's love for us, knowing that we are not alone, and that whenever we are in trouble, or sad or sorrowful, we need not be afraid because God is right here beside us to help us through it all and to give us hope for the future. As we stand firm in the Lord, we know that we will always be sheltered under the wings of God. With these

assurances we can go forth into the world rejoicing in the power of the Spirit to share the love of Jesus Christ with all whom we meet.

I invite you to join me in watching and praying with Jesus during these 40 days of Lent.

A Blessed Lent to all.

Amen.