

ST. JAMES PARISH CHURCH

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

READINGS FOR MARCH 5, 2023

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

THE COLLECT: SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

THE FIRST READING: GENESIS 12:1-4A

This reading describes one of history's turning points. Abram obeyed the divine promptings, and the result was the Bible's whole story and the influence of Christianity on subsequent history.

A Reading from the Word of God, written in the Book of Genesis Chapter 12, beginning at the first verse.

The LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him.

The Word of the Lord

The people: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 121

A song of trust in the Lord, the unsleeping guardian of Israel.

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills; *
from where is my help to come?
- 2 My help comes from the LORD, *
the maker of heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not let your foot be moved *
and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.
- 4 Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel *
shall neither slumber nor sleep;
- 5 The Lord himself watches over you; *
the LORD is your shade at your right hand,
- 6 So that the sun shall not strike you by day, *
nor the moon by night.
- 7 The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; *
it is he who shall keep you safe.
- 8 The LORD shall watch over your going out and your
coming in, *
from this time forth for evermore.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son:*
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now:*
and shall be forever.

THE SECOND READING - ROMANS 4:1-5, 13-17

Paul has written that one can attain a right relationship with God through faith, without living by Mosaic law. Now he takes Abraham as an example; he asks: what can we conclude about coming to God by faith rather than by Law?

A Reading from the Word of God, written in the Letter of Paul to the Romans Chapter 4, beginning at the first verse.

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

For the 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. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

For 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, as 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.

The Word of the Lord

The people: Thanks be to God.

THE GOSPEL - JOHN 3:1-17

Isaiah has been told that most people will reject God’s message, preferring their traditional ways. Now Nicodemus, a devout and learned leader in Judaism, shows himself to be so steeped in traditional ways of thinking about God that he rejects Jesus’ teaching about how to enter the Kingdom of God.

Gospeler: The Lord be with you

All: And also with you

Gospeler: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to Christ Our Saviour.

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi,

we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

This is the Gospel of Christ

The people: Praise to Christ our Lord.

(NRSV)

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