

February 28th Worship
2st Sunday in Lent

Introduction to the Day

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.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the keeper of the covenant,
the source of steadfast love,
our rock and our redeemer.

Amen.

God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in
Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of
compassion.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Fountain of living water,
pour out your mercy over us.
Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free.
Rebuild what we have ruined
and mend what we have torn.

Wash us in your cleansing flood.
Make us alive in the Spirit
to follow in the way of Jesus,
as healers and restorers of the world you so love.
Amen.

Beloved, God's word never fails.

The promise rests on grace:

by the saving love of Jesus Christ,
the wisdom and power of God,

your sins are † forgiven, and God remembers them
no more.

Journey in the way of Jesus.

Amen.

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.

Lesson – 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."

Gospel – Mark 8:31-38

¹[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.³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.³³ But 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.³⁵ For 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.³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?³⁸ Those 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.”

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

We find ourselves, here on the Second Sunday in the season of Lent, with our Rollercoaster of Life as an Easter people still fresh in our memories. And we are confronted by a Gospel text that we hear frequently throughout life in the lectionary.

This Gospel text is one of those that some variation of it comes around every single year. Jesus is telling his followers that he must undergo great suffering. He'll be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, the scribes. And, he'll be killed. After three days he will be risen. Jesus is freely talking about what is to happen to him. He is openly proclaiming the things that will take place. Peter is alarmed by this.

It says that “Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.” Peter began to passionately tell him to put a cork in it.

“But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter.” He passionately told Peter to put a cork in it. Followed by, “get behind me, Satan.” I think we frequently focus on those words. “Get behind me, Satan.” Four words. We do this because we know that Peter is the rock on whom Christ will build his church. We know that that is what is to come for Peter, that it is upon Peter, whom will be the rock, that the church will be built.

Jesus saying “get behind me, Satan” to the eventual rock of his church, is something we often dwell on. What does it mean that Jesus would rebuke Peter, the rock, and say, “get behind me, Satan?” Why is it that Peter is rebuking Jesus? Why does Peter want Jesus not talking about what he has to go through?

Is he afraid that people become aware of who Jesus is?

Does he think Jesus is crazy?

Is he worried that if people do discover who Jesus is, they will come for him sooner? That openly talking about what is going to happen to him will accelerate the plot against him?

Or, if he's thinking Jesus is sounding crazy that it will have a negative effect on those who hear what Jesus has to say.

“Get behind me, Satan.” We struggle to get beyond those words and wonder, “what is that Satan force active in our life? What is Satan causing us not to hear or see or believe?”

But Jesus doesn't stop at, “Get behind me, Satan.”

He goes on. "For you are setting your mind, not on divine things" - You aren't setting your mind on what God is up to in the midst of this - "you are setting your mind on human things." You are only thinking of what you are capable of on your own as Peter. You aren't thinking of what God might be up to in this situation.

That's where this rollercoaster of life as Easter people comes into play. Again, we have our Baptism where, in those few moments where the waters of Baptism wash over us and we are never more hopeful. In that hopeful moment we are marked as God's beloved. That is the high point of this roller coaster of a life.

But, as we heard last week, in Jesus' life - following his baptism - he is thrown down from there and he spends time in the wilderness. We know that for some of us there is no set time to that time spent in the wilderness. Though we more openly acknowledge that wilderness time in this 40 day Season of Lent, there is no set time for the actual wilderness of our lives.

But, we do know that we start to come out of it. We do know that we start to experience newness and as we get up, we start to feel that hope of newness. But at the top, at this peak, when we get to that point, there's sometimes an up and down and up and down feel.

This is where we find ourselves today. Peter is hearing the plan and hearing what is to happen to Jesus. This man that he has followed, this man who will make him the rock on whom the church will be built, is telling them what has to happen to him. And he is in denial. This is not the last time Peter will be in denial of what Jesus is in his life.

He's in denial. He is grieving. We know the up and down that comes right before the newness is realized. Peter hears that this Jesus that he has followed and devoted his life to, this ministry that he is in the midst of, and this work that he has signed on for is important. And, looking back and looking ahead, he can't imagine it without Jesus.

He is grieving.

We know that the peak that comes right before that new life is realized, is another one of these wilderness journeys that doesn't have a set time for how long it takes. We know that when we grieve the loss of something, we go through a seemingly never ending up and down cycle with emotions all over the board. And, amid those emotions are the feelings of denial. There is anger. There is sadness. There is hope. And whatever else we might feel, but it is all a part of the grieving process. Peter in this Gospel text is right in the thick of it.

This gospel text doesn't stop at, "You are setting your mind not on divine things, but on human things." It goes on from there as well, just as it goes on from "get behind me, Satan." It goes on from, "you are setting your mind, not on divine things, not on what God is up to, but what you think only you can do."

"And he called the crowd with the disciples. If anyone want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For 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."

He's calling them into the promise. He's calling them into the divine act of what he is to go through, to see the new life that is to come. Peter, and those who hear what Jesus is saying, stop listening at Jesus being killed. The human newness of that reality makes it difficult for them to see the promise. It makes it difficult for them to hear that he will be raised again in three days.

Our cross today - as people amid a pandemic, as people amid the angst and wondering, wandering, and wilderness, that at times seems to have no end in sight - our cross as Jesus people on this rollercoaster that eventually gets to new life - is to know and trust God's action in all of it.

Our cross is to see those moments and spaces where there's hope. Our cross is to, in this journey towards wholeness, see those spaces and times and places where we aren't whole and to find God in the void.

And

To be that filler for our neighbor.

Our cross is to be hope and hopefulness for our neighbor when they feel hopeless.

And,

one day,

that new life will come.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

Your gift of grace is for all people. Give confident faith to all the baptized, that they may follow you wholeheartedly. Give new believers joy in your promises; give hope and courage to those who suffer for their faith. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

All the ends of the earth worship you. From galaxies to microorganisms, preserve your creation. Teach humanity to wonder at your works and to join you in tending to creation's well-being. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You rule over the nations. Raise up advocates for peace and justice within and between nations. Give life where hope seems dead; call into existence new realities we cannot even imagine. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

In Jesus you joined humanity in suffering and death. Reveal to all the depth of your love shown on the cross. Accompany all who suffer in body, mind, and spirit. Restore all who are sick or grieving. Bring vindication for victims of injustice, exploitation, and oppression. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You made Abraham and Sarah the ancestors of a multitude of nations. Bless grandparents, parents, and foster parents, and the children who look to them for care and guidance. Console those who deal with infertility, parents who have entrusted their children to adoption, and children longing to be adopted. Equip ministries and services to families. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We await the day of Christ's coming in glory. Lead us by the example of all the saints whom you have called to take up their cross and follow you, that together we may find our lives in you. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Faithful God,
you walk beside us in desert places, and you meet us in our hunger with bread from heaven. Accompany us in this meal, that we may pass over from death to life with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

You are what God made you to be:
created in Christ Jesus for good works,
chosen as holy and beloved,
freed to serve your neighbor.

God bless you ☩ that you may be a blessing,
in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.

Amen.

Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

A Communal Fast from the Sacrament of Holy Communion

We will be taking a communal fast from the Sacrament of Holy Communion for the Season of Lent. The next time we will take communion as a community of faith will be on Maundy Thursday, when we remember the night in which Jesus first gave this meal.

Re-Connect Opportunities will be starting again THIS WEEK!

We hope you will join us for any, or all, of these Re-Connect Opportunities throughout the week!

Stop in for coffee and conversation at 9 am on Mondays

TUESDAYS be sure to stop by for Bible Study starting at 11, followed by Lunch and Laughter at noon.

Wednesdays will continue to be our Faith Formation Days

Thursdays we will have the sanctuary open for prayer for 8 am to 3 pm.

Looking ahead to that day when we return to in-person worship

We know that there is a sense of hope and optimism for returning to in-person worship with the arrival and distribution of the Covid Vaccine. The increased rate of vaccination, and decreased rate of Covid spread will help get us to that goal of being back together again. However, this is not something that we are going to rush and we are grateful to be in continual dialogue with the other ELCA congregations of Eau Claire, and in consultation with the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Council of Churches.