

# Reflections

Connecting the True Word to Real Life

Lent 2: March 10-16, 2019



## A Word of Introduction

We're entering the second week of Lent and have just experienced (in churches that are paying attention to Lent and the Lectionary) Jesus' Temptation in the Wilderness. The forty days he spent there are meant to mirror the forty day period of self-denial and self-examination that Lent offers. The season of Lent is also focused on journeying with Jesus. We have opportunity to sit at his feet as he teaches and to walk the path those feet have travelled. This week we also are invited to spend a bit of time journeying with Abram and Sarai. Their example of faithfulness is lifted up as an example to Christians and their lives fit well into Lenten themes of letting go of life as usual and taking up God's call to new possibilities. This week's reflections are based on the Revised Common Lectionary- a collection of scripture readings designed to take churches through the broad sweep of scripture over the course of three years. By studying these passages you will be joining a multitude of Christians around the globe who are reading the same parts of the Bible that you are. You can, of course, do these readings on your own and gain great benefit. Greater benefit still can be achieved by joining others to share your thoughts and reflections. Feel free to use these questions as a starting point for your own small group discussion. If there is enough interest I would be willing to lead or sit in with small groups when my schedule allows. Contact me via e-mail at [dbagley@michiganumc.org](mailto:dbagley@michiganumc.org) to indicate your interest. You can also receive a daily dose of the reflections below along with some additional material by checking our Greater Southwest District Facebook Page each day. Again this week I've included a couple of prayers for morning and evening that you might wish to lift up. These too are taken from "Feasting on the Word".

## Passages for the Week

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18, Psalm 27, Philippians 3:17-4:1, Luke 13:31-35

## Prayers for the Week:

### Morning Prayer

Hope beyond all human hope, you promised descendants as numerous as the stars to old Abraham and barren Sarah. You promise light and salvation in the midst of darkness and despair, and promise redemption to a world that will not listen. Gather us to yourself in tenderness, open our ears to listen to your word, and teach us to live faithfully as people confident of fulfillment of your promises. Amen.

### Evening Prayer

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Amen.

## Questions for Reflection

### Day One: Monday, March 11

#### First Fruits - Read Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18.

-The strangeness of this passage probably trips most of us up before we get to what's essential about it. The experience Abram has with the LORD is one that is not familiar to us. In this passage we see an example of the ancient practice of covenant-making (literally described as "cutting a covenant"). In this ritual the one making the promise would walk between the divided animals calling death to visit them if they broke the covenant. Here the LORD passes between the offering in the form of a brazier and torch (one of YHWH's favorite ways of appearing before mere mortals). It serves as a sign that God will keep the promise made to Abram. In this story God's faithfulness makes Abram's faithful response possible. The text labels Abram's response "righteousness". In this case the word means: "to be faithful to one's relationships- with God and with other persons". What do we usually understand "righteousness" to mean? What is the difference between being good and being faithful? How does God's faithfulness to us make possible our faithfulness in our relationships?

-The New Testament writers frequently use passages from the Old Testament as illustrations. This text is embraced and put to use by several of them. For fun (yes, I know this is a strange idea of "fun"), compare what is said in Genesis 15:6 with how it's explained in Hebrews 11:8-12.

### Day Two: Tuesday, March 12

#### The Lord is My Light... - Read Psalm 27

-This Psalm expresses confidence while lifting up petitions or God's continuing grace and favor. Spend some time reading and reflecting on this Psalm. What particular thanksgivings do you notice? Do these connect with your experience as well? What petitions do you note? If you were to pen your own Psalm, what praises and petitions would you include?

### Day Three: Wednesday, March 13

#### ...and My Salvation - Read Psalm 27

-This Psalm bears at least one more reading and can hold up to a bit more reflection. When have you felt God's face turn away from you?

-What would it mean to "see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living?" Do you expect to see it for yourself?

-The instruction to "wait for the Lord" is repeated throughout the scripture. What does it mean to "Wait for the Lord"?

## **Day Four: Thursday, March 14**

### **Citizenship in Heaven - Read Philippians 3:17-4:1**

-We have many ways of identifying where we belong and to whom we are connected. A single individual might name a dozen or more groups to which they are somehow linked. The Apostle Paul suggests that the Christian should consider their primary connection to be the Kingdom of Heaven. This, of course, got those who took his instruction to heart into considerable trouble. Saying things like, "Jesus is Lord" were acquainted with treason. Still, Christians remained eager to make this confession. What do you think they believed they would gain in return for taking such a huge risk?

-Who are the enemies of the cross today? What form do they take? How does a person seeking to be faithful confront them as Jesus would?

-We are citizens of the United States, many of us patriotically so. Does this citizenship in any way conflict with our citizenship in heaven?

## **Day Five: Friday, March 15**

### **"Jerusalem, Jerusalem"- Read Luke 13:31-35**

-Jesus expresses great remorse at the fact that the citizens of the Holy City have rejected his message and in so doing they reject him as well. How is Jesus rejected today? Do you think it still grieves him or has he gotten used to it by now?

-In this passage Jesus basically says that Jerusalem is going to be left to its own devices and that ain't good. That being said, is there some good that arises from this situation? What good did/would God bring out of the calamity of that Jerusalem experience?

### **Responding to the Word**

In Luke 13:34 Jesus compares himself to a mother hen gathering her chicks. When have you felt held in a warm embrace? Imagine that it is Christ who holds you and gathers you into his arms. How does the thought of that make you feel? How can we help draw others into Christ's embrace?