



This week the readings remind us of the toughest part of responding to the call of Jesus. In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "When Jesus calls a person to follow him, he calls that person to come and die." The paradox of the Gospel that is highlighted this week, though, is that it is in dying that we find life.

May we, through our worship, receive the courage and the conviction to take up our crosses this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Genesis 17 : 1-17, 15-16

This Lent our Old Testament readings pick out those moments in Israel's history when God seemed to have made new promises to his people, which the bible calls 'covenants'. Here, the faithful Abraham and Sarah are promised descendants who will become a great nation, and the Lord will be their God for ever.

The Psalm - Psalm 22: 23-31

God is praised and celebrated because God cares and provides for the oppressed, and all nations will come to worship God, both poor and prosperous, healthy and those close to death.

Romans 4 : 13-25

Paul reminds his readers of God's covenant promise to Abraham and Sarah. It was their faithfulness that was blessed by God. So too we receive blessing by our faith in Christ raised from the dead.

Mark 8 : 31-38

As Jesus began to reveal his destiny, Peter could not bear it. But Jesus teaches that just as his way was one of suffering for others, so for us all selfishness must be renounced as we take up our own cross.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Genesis
%2017:%201-7,%2015-16%0Acw%20Psalm%2022:%2023-31%0ARomans
%204:%2013-25%0AMark%208:%2031-38](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Genesis%2017:%201-7,%2015-16%0Acw%20Psalm%2022:%2023-31%0ARomans%204:%2013-25%0AMark%208:%2031-38)

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Almighty God,
who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves;
Keep us both outwardly in our bodies,
and inwardly in our souls;
that we may be defended from all adversities
which may happen to the body,
and from all evil thoughts
which may assault and hurt the soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty God,
you show to those who are in error the light of your truth
that they may return to the way of righteousness:
Grant to all those who are admitted
into the fellowship of Christ's religion,
that they may reject those things
that are contrary to their profession,
and follow all such things
as are agreeable to the same;
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Presider or deacon

As we prepare for the paschal feast, let us offer intercessions to God who gave up his Son for us.

Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering, for all Christians enduring persecution and tested by suffering, and for all the holy people of God.

Lord, have mercy.

For *NN* our catechumen(s) and *NN* their sponsors(s).

Lord, have mercy.

For the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, for all who share God's covenant, and for all the peoples of the earth.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who are oppressed, afflicted, or in despair.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead, and for those who mourn.

Lord, have mercy.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Lord, have mercy.

Remembering *N*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Blessed are you, God of our ancestors, who sent your Son to suffer greatly and after three days rise from the dead. Receive the prayers we offer this day and enable us to take up our cross and follow Jesus Christ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

- P** Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.
- P** Lord Jesus Christ, You came down from heaven to die for the sins of the entire world. Through the good news of Your salvation, send Your Holy Spirit into the hearts of those who do not yet cling to You for salvation. Work faith in the hearts of all unbelievers so that all who hear of Your mercy and compassion may receive the gift of forgiveness. Lord, in Your mercy,
- C** **hear our prayer.**
- P** Almighty God, give to Your Church a sense of urgency in proclaiming the good news of Your salvation. Magnify the power of the Gospel in the hearts of Your faithful people so that they may search for those who live apart from You. Instill in them love for lost sheep and, by Your Word and Sacrament, grant them boldness and confidence as they provide a Christian witness in both word and deed to those You place in their lives. Lord, in Your mercy,
- C** **hear our prayer.**
- P** O God, source of all abiding knowledge, through Word and Spirit You both enlighten the minds and sanctify the lives of those whom You draw to Your service. Look with favour on the Church's theological college, blessing those who teach and those who learn, that all the baptized may apply themselves with ready diligence to their tasks and faithfully fulfill their service according to Your will. Lord, in Your mercy,
- C** **hear our prayer.**
- P** Abide, O Gracious Father, with all those who are undergoing times of transition. Support them in times of change and surround them with caring Christian people so that they may find welcome and peace. Remind them that You will never leave them nor forsake them, and that even in the midst of change You are the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Lord, in Your mercy,
- C** **hear our prayer.**

P O Lord, by water and Spirit, You work forgiveness of sins, rescue from death and the devil, and give eternal salvation. Grant to all those who suffer from injury, disease, or any type of pain the assurance that they are baptized into Your Holy Name (*especially* _____). Strengthen their faith, so that despite their struggles, they may always remain Your dear children. Deal compassionately with Your servants, and bless them with Your healing power. We commit them to Your gracious mercy and protection. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Eternal God, the Resurrection and the Life, by Your Word and Spirit strengthen all those who mourn (*especially* _____) with the knowledge that their loved one is at home in Your heavenly kingdom. Increase in all mourners the confidence that all who die in faith are with You in everlasting life and eternal peace. Give them courage to walk by faith until that day when all who belong to You will be reunited around the throne of the Lamb. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P O Lord, our God, make us ready this day to receive the most holy body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of all our sins, and grant us grateful hearts. Lord, in Your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P Into Your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Creator of heaven and earth,
we thank you for these holy mysteries
given us by our Lord Jesus Christ,
by which we receive your grace
and are assured of your love,
which is through him now and for ever.

PRAYERS

God of wilderness and water,
your Son was baptized and tempted as we are.
Guide us through this season,
that we may not avoid struggle,
but open ourselves to blessing,
through the cleansing depths of repentance
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit. Amen.

Artist of souls,
you sculpted a people for yourself
out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and simplicity,
that the discipline of these forty days
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy friendship,
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer

through Jesus Christ. Amen.

God of the covenant,
in the glory of the cross
your Son embraced the power of death
and broke its hold over your people.
In this time of repentance,
draw all people to yourself,
that we who confess Jesus as Lord
may put aside the deeds of death
and accept the life of your kingdom. Amen.

God of the living,
through baptism we pass from the shadow of death
to the light of the resurrection.
Remain with us and give us hope
that, rejoicing in the gift of the Spirit
who gives life to our mortal flesh,
we may be clothed with the garment of immortality,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of the covenant,
you call us to be fruitful servants within creation,
and to offer our lives
as the foundation of your realm.
We lay before you the desires of our hearts,
that we may be transformed by their fulfillment....

...Grant, O God, that the prayers we offer
may be your channel for new and abundant life
not only hoped for,
but worked for,
through faithful word and deed. Amen.

God of Sarah and Abraham,
long ago you embraced your people in covenant
and promised them your blessing.
Strengthen us in faith,
that, with your disciples of every age,
we may proclaim your deliverance in Jesus Christ
to generations yet unborn. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16:

- This text ties directly with the Romans passage for today - it is the text Paul is speaking about in his argument.

- God comes to Abram when he is 99. We should be reminded that we are never beyond the point in life where God can and wants to use us and guide us. There is no retirement from discipleship!
- Often in the Bible, God changes someone's name as a sign of God's promise to them. Do you have nicknames that are meaningful to you because of what they symbolize? If you chose a name for yourself based on God's work with/in you, what would it be?

Psalm 22:23-31:

- We see this Psalm again in its entirety soon - a Good Friday Psalm. Today, our focus on on a specific section, not the "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" section we usually associate with this Psalm. *This* section is the conclusion of the Psalm - a much more hopeful section.
- "[God] did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted . . . [God] heard when I cried to him" People tend to shy away from the pain and hardship of others. It is hard to watch others in pain, suffering, because we feel so helpless. But God never turns away from us in the midst of our trouble.
- "The poor shall eat and be satisfied." What a day to look forward to. But think also metaphorically - how often do we fill ourselves and our lives with things that don't *really* satisfy us? Whenever we do, we are outside of God's plans and hopes for us.

Romans 4:13-25:

Our Old Testament lesson ties in with this lesson from Romans - read the Genesis account of Abram to give you more grounding for Paul's theological arguments here.

This was a text I studied carefully when I was writing a paper my freshman year of [college](#) on *sola fide*. Ah, how enlightened I was! But the texts I used still bring me straight back to the paper I was working on: are we saved by faith or works? We answer faith with our lips, but sometimes works with our actions and attitudes. •

We're always trying to earn God's love, and always convinced we (and others) can never live up to it.

According to Paul, Abraham's faith is in God's promises. "No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God." Sometimes I think we get confused and try to have faith simply in our own abilities. That's an impossible task. Instead, our faith should focus on God's promises and the fulfillment of those promises in our midst.

Mark 8:31-38:

I picture Peter plugging his ears, not wanting to hear something like Jesus' words about death and suffering, a reaction a child might have. Peter wants to keep what he sees as 'bad news' away. What aren't you ready to hear God say to you?

Jesus tells them to take up their cross before he is crucified. His words, then, mean more than literal crucifixion for his followers. What do you think the disciples thought he meant? What would it mean for *you* to take up a cross and follow Jesus?

To save your life, you must lose it, if you lose your life for Christ, you save it. Certainly there is a degree of literal-ness here. But also, I think of things we say we "lose ourselves" in, like our work, our art, our passions, our music, our spouse, etc. Christ wants us to lose ourselves . . . in him!

By Beth Quick

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The Lectionary this week challenges what we understand by the word "faith". What becomes clear here is that faith is not about some intellectual assent to certain propositions. Rather, faith is about the losing of our lives for the sake of the Gospel, which includes both the purpose to which we devote our lives, and the practices by which we seek to live out that purpose. In Abraham's case, God renews the promise which called Abraham from his homeland. In response Abraham had tried to use very human methods to fulfil God's promise, with undesirable results. Now God emphasises that not just the purpose, but the ways that purpose is fulfilled, must be directed by God's agenda. In the Psalm, God's rulership of the earth is celebrated, along with the justice and grace that this brings to the earth. In the midst of this song of celebration, the psalmist recommits to fulfilling vows to God. In the letter to the Romans, Paul reflects on Abraham's faith and how it was this, and not obedience to law, that was his righteousness. Here faith is once again viewed as the giving of life to follow God's purposes, as opposed to simply agreeing to some legalistic propositions. Finally, the Gospel drives the theme home in a very challenging way. Peter, who had just expressed faith in Jesus, is reprimanded because his faith has not yet embraced the implications of what he believes. So, Jesus challenges him, and the other disciples, to allow their faith to become the driving cause for their lives – to lose their lives for the sake of Jesus and the message of God's Reign that Jesus embodied. Here faith moves from an intellectual activity to a radical, transforming, all-consuming way of being. The challenge of this, and of the Lenten journey, of course, is whether we are ready and willing to embrace this faith, or simply remain with a safer, intellectual pseudo-faith.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: One of the great challenges of our time is the question of to what we will give our lives. The great ideological visions of economic systems, political positions, and pride in country, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation all ask for our energy and devotion. Conversely, the pull of individualism, making the self the primary focus of our energy and purpose, may draw us away from these great visions, but replaces them with something equally inadequate. Where the Gospel differs from all of these calls for our allegiance, is in its selflessness and inclusivity. Where all of these human quests drive us toward greater focus on our group, our position, our needs or our voice, the Gospel calls us to lay what is ours aside for the sake of others. This is not to say that these human calls do have a place in our work of following Christ and seeking God's justice for all. It is important that those who are marginalised and suffering are heard, and this usually requires that oppressed groups make strong commitments to themselves and oppose their

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oppressors. However, as history has shown us repeatedly, when our ideologies and groups become an end in themselves, they inevitably become oppressors of their own, and they inevitably prove inadequate to sustain true justice and life. The true prophets of justice have always called their followers to sacrifice, to love of enemy, to service, and to the selfless quest for justice for all, not just for some. Abraham was blessed, to be a blessing to the entire world, and Paul calls followers of Jesus to similar faith – a giving of themselves for the sake of the Gospel, rather than adherence to "the law" as an ideology or mark of an "in-group". And the Gospel, of course, proclaims clearly that Jesus called his followers to sacrifice and selflessness in service of God's Reign, which more than any ideology, seeks to bring true Jubilee-justice into the world. It's a tough call, but when our faith – or our service of society – becomes about our own needs and aspiration only, or when our quest for justice becomes a quest also to marginalise or exclude any other person or group, we have not understood God's Reign or the justice it offers. But, when we are willing to lose our lives for the sake of the Gospel, we will discover that we have not only brought justice, grace and peace to others, but we have found it for ourselves as well. The question then becomes whether we are willing to give our lives for the sake of the Gospel, to take up our cross, and lose our lives for others and for God's Reign, as Jesus did. Only when the world is filled with those who will answer this call will we see significant answers to the crises we face.

LOCAL APPLICATION: In every human contact, be it the intimacy of sexuality, or the shared life of community, the question of self-preservation versus self-giving must be answered. There are many voices in our world that advise in favour of the former, preaching a message of self-fulfilment, self-development and self-care often at the expense of others. While there is great benefit in the message of appropriate self-awareness and care, when this becomes our central focus, we inevitably sacrifice our relationships on the altar of our own dreams, desires and needs. The ironic result is broken people, broken families, broken communities and broken societies. Yet, paradoxically, it is in giving ourselves, sacrificing our own longings and desires, losing ourselves in service of others, that life is truly found. This is the message that Jesus lived and preached and called his disciples to embrace. God's Reign is not a kingdom that seeks to establish itself through the conquest of other kingdoms. Not do the followers of God's Reign receive promotion over those who do not. Rather God's Reign invites us into a different kind of life, one that filters through every other structure and system in societies and communities and that calls us to adopt the stance of servanthood and sacrifice. And it is here, in seeking to love and serve more than to be loved and served, that our most intimate relationships flourish and we find the safety and comfort we need. It is here, in seeking to bring justice and peace to others that we create communities of safety, equality and opportunity for all, including ourselves. It is here, in seeking to create a world of care for one another and taking responsibility for our common well-being, that we find the kind of planet we long for. In truth, the self-giving call of God's Reign that Jesus embodied, is the most practical, common-sense way of living we could ask for. But, this does not stop it being a difficult and counter-intuitive choice to make.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Day 1 - A Different Kind of Dream. Excerpt : Luckily, we are given some help within the story itself. There are two parts to this passage: what happens on the mountain (strange as it is) and the discussion about it as they come down from the mountain. Did you notice? Beginning in v. 9, Mark tells us what Jesus has to say about the whole event: "As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead." It may not seem like much help, but it is. Let me explain. I think in some ways it's like watching a movie on DVD, with those special features, like watching it in French or out-takes, that kind of thing. Only in this case, it's like Mark has provided the director's comments. We see the story unfold, but we also get interpretive clues.

http://day1.org/3551-a_different_kind_of_dream

More on The Transfiguration - in fact eight sermons at -

<http://day1.org/topic/transfiguration>

Abraham, Sarah, and Laughter - Frederick Buechner always had a fascination with this event, referring to it numerous times in many of his books. Here is a passage called "Sarah" originally from [*Peculiar Treasures*](#) and later published in [*Beyond Words*](#):

"Quantitatively speaking, you don't find all that much laughter in the Bible, but, qualitatively, there's nothing quite like it to be found anywhere else. There are a couple of chapters in the book of Genesis that positively shake with it. Sarah was never going to see ninety again, and Abraham had already hit one hundred, and when the angel told them that the stork was on its way at last, they both of them almost collapsed. Abraham laughed "till he fell on his face" (Genesis 17:17), and Sarah stood cackling behind the tent door so the angel wouldn't think she was being rude as the tears streamed down her cheeks. When the baby finally came, they even called him "Laughter"—which is what Isaac means in Hebrew—because obviously no other name would do.

"Laughter gets mixed up with all sorts of things in the Bible and in the world too...

<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-abraham-sarah-and-laughter>

Abraham - Episcopal sermon

Father Abraham had many children./Many children had Father Abraham./I am one of them, and so are you./ So let's just praise the Lord!

How does Abraham offer a lens through which we can understand our relationship with the living God, known as El Shaddai to Abraham and Sarah? Scroll down to Lent 2

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2009/03/?cat=7>

CHILDREN

The Second Sunday in Lent Year B 1st March , 2015

[Worshipping with Children](#), Lent 2B, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown, 2015.

<http://http://www.worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/year-b-second-sunday-in-lent-march-1.html>

Sermons4kids - Talk based on Matthew 17:5. God confirms that Jesus is His Son. Visuals - several bumper stickers

http://sermons4kids.com/that_settles_it.htm

Children's sermons today - Mistaken identity - on the Gospel reading

<http://childrenssermonstoday.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/mistaken-identity.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[When I Survey The Wondrous Cost](#)

[Take My Life And Let It Be](#)

[The God Of Abraham Praise](#)

[Come Let Us Use The Grace Divine](#)

[O Jesus I Have Promised](#)

[However](#)

[Here I Am, Jesus](#)

[Let Me Shine](#)

[All I Am I Lay It Down](#)

[O The Wonderful Cross](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[God Of Justice](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

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