

Dear Friends in Christ,

We have walked our first Stations of the Cross this past Friday. It is a good thing to repeat this primitive rite in this the age of cell phones and internet communication. This Wednesday we will have our first Lenten program to which all are invited.

5:40 Evening Prayer in the choir room

6:00 a simple meal - soup and bread

6:20 Program - Intro to the life and thought of St Augustine as found in the Confessions

7:00 Service - speaker, praise and worship, prayers. We will be out before 8:00.

Here are the readings for next Sunday.

YIC PRN prnbuffalo.mac@mac.com

“To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.” Karl Barth

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Year A

Genesis 12:1-4a

This is the call of Abram who will be renamed Abraham. At the end of the previous chapter, Terah, Abram's father took Abram, Sarai his wife and Lot, Abram's nephew from Ur, a great city on the Euphrates River, upstream 500-600 miles to Haran where Terah dies. And that is all the Bible tells us about Abram previous to his call.

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.

1. So what was so special about Abram that Yahweh would choose him?

2. So what did Abram do? _____

3. Have we been blessed through Abram/Abraham? _____

4. So what is the message to sinful average us? _____

Psalm 121

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.

This is so beautiful and so comforting but to me, it begs a question. What happens when evil befalls us – disease, crime, accident? Is it our fault? Is God angry with us?

How can we resolve this? _____

Romans 4:1-5,13-17

Paul is writing to Jewish Christians in Rome. They have to be Jewish in order for this to make sense.

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.

This is Paul's mantra, justification by faith. As we saw, Abram was nothing special other than he listened to YAHWEH and did what he was told.

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.

Abram/Abraham was before Moses and "THE LAW" therefore, Abram/Abraham was not rewarded for how well he obeyed the LAW but for his faith.

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.

1. So, if you have faith in YAHWEH and Jesus, what will happen to you? What will you do? How will you behave?

2. When I think of "justification by faith" and not by works, I think about the words of an old "Negro Spiritual" (as we used to say):
"If religion were a thing that money could buy,
you know the rich would live and the poor would die."

John 3:1-17

Nicodemus was a member of the Great Sanhedrin and assisted Joseph of Arimathea in the care of Jesus' body after the crucifixion.

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."

1. Nicodemus, who is well studied in "the Law", appears clueless. What do you think his problem is?

2. What is the good news? _____
