



SUNDAY, AUGUST 7–13

TIME AFTER PENTECOST — LECTORY 19

FIRST READING: Genesis 15:1-6

A reading from Genesis.

¹After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision,
“Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield;
your reward shall be very great.”
²But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me,
for I continue childless,
and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”
³And Abram said, “You have given me no offspring,
and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.”
⁴But the word of the LORD came to him,
“This man shall not be your heir;
no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.”
⁵He brought him outside and said,
“Look toward heaven and count the stars,
if you are able to count them.”
Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”
⁶And he believed the LORD;
and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

The word of the Lord.

or

Word of God, word of life.

PSALMODY: Psalm 33:12-22

FIRST READING *Eliezer = el-ih-EE-zer*

This little story is loaded with drama. It is a vision or a dream and as such should be shrouded in a sense of mystery. God and Abram are in dialog. Help us to distinguish between the two characters. (One way is to pause adequately between the end of one character's speaking and the beginning of the other.) As the day's lessons are all about faith, note that verse 6 summarizes the whole point of the reading.

SECOND READING: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

A reading from Hebrews.

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.

²Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval.

³By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God,
so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed
when he was called to set out
for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance;
and he set out, not knowing where he was going.

⁹By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised,
as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob,
who were heirs with him of the same promise.

¹⁰For he looked forward to the city that has foundations,
whose architect and builder is God.

¹¹By faith he received power of procreation,
even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—
because he considered him faithful who had promised.

¹²Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead,
descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven
and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”

¹³All of these died in faith without having received the promises,
but from a distance they saw and greeted them.

They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth,

¹⁴for people who speak in this way
make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

¹⁵If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind,
they would have had opportunity to return.

¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.
Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God;
indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

The word of the Lord.

or

Word of God, word of life.

SECOND READING

The little treatise on faith found here is of critical importance and enormous comfort. It requires an intensity in the reading born of certain hope. More important still, it requires that the reader spend some significant time in advance of the reading “thinking it through.” Help the hearer not only follow the story of Abraham and Sarah but the logic and conclusions of the author as well.

GOSPEL: Luke 12:32-40

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Jesus said:

³²“Do not be afraid, little flock,

for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

³³Sell your possessions, and give alms.

Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out,

an unfailing treasure in heaven,

where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit;

³⁶be like those who are waiting

for their master to return from the wedding banquet,

so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks.

³⁷Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes;

truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat,

and he will come and serve them.

³⁸If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn,

and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

³⁹But know this:

if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming,

he would not have let his house be broken into.

⁴⁰You also must be ready,

for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL

Substantial pauses between paragraphs provide each of the three varied images in the gospel its own space. Invest some time wrestling with the image of the master serving the slaves in the middle paragraph and find a way to tuck its meaning into the sound the reading. Verses 35-38 comprise another strong argument (even for those who read before the assembly weekly) to practice out loud for the sake of the gospel.