



SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

FIRST READING: Genesis 12:1-4a

A reading from Genesis.

¹The LORD said to Abram,
“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house
to the land that I will show you.

²I will make of you a great nation,
and I will bless you, and make your name great,
so that you will be a blessing.

³I 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.”

⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

PSALMODY: Psalm 121

SECOND READING: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

A reading from Romans.

¹What are we to say was gained by Abraham,
our ancestor according to the flesh?

²For if Abraham was justified by works,
he has something to boast about, but not before God.

³For what does the scripture say?

“Abraham believed God,
and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.”

⁴Now to one who works,
wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due.

⁵But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly,
such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

FIRST READING *Abram = AY-brum*

This is simple, straightforward reading. God directs Abram (later to be called Abraham) with a simple command coupled with a grand promise. The punch line is in verse 4a: “So Abram went.” A good, solid pause preceding those words might helpfully prepare the person in the pew to better hear them.

SECOND READING

This reading is a bit more difficult than the first. It doesn’t entirely hang together. Steer the assembly through it carefully. The point is that faith is reckoned to the believer as righteousness. Verse 15 feels much like an awkward insert. Treat it as though it were in parentheses. Verses 16 and 17 are one, long, complicated sentence. Move the hearers through it slowly and confidently.

¹³For 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.

¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.

¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For 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, ¹⁷as 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.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

GOSPEL: John 3:1-17

The holy gospel according to John.

¹Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews.

²He 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.”

³Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

⁴Nicodemus 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?”

⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ▶

GOSPEL *Pharisee = FAIR-uh-see Nicodemus = nick-uh-DEEM-us*

If the words of Nicodemus sound like those of one who is struggling hard to understand, Jesus’ words ought to sound like those of one who is struggling hard to help the inquiring disciple to see that the Son of God is within arm’s length.

⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh,
and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.

⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you,
'You must be born from above.'

⁸The 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."

⁹Nicodemus said to him,
"How can these things be?"

¹⁰Jesus answered him,
"Are you a teacher of Israel,
and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹Very truly, I tell you,
we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen;
yet you do not receive our testimony.

¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe,
how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

¹³"No one has ascended into heaven
except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,
so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶"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.

¹⁷Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world,
but in order that the world might be saved through him."

The gospel of the Lord.