

## The Second Sunday in Lent YEAR C FEBRUARY 21, 2016

To what extent does faith offers us blessing and protection, and to what extent is it a call to suffer for the higher cause of God's justice, peace and liberation? Can both of these aspects of faith be true at the same time? These are the challenges posed by this week's Lectionary, and the answer, reflected in Jesus, is a resounding "yes"! We can know the pain of persecution and suffering even as we rest in God's protective presence.

May our worship give us the strength and wisdom to embrace and live these two seemingly contradictory truths.

### INTRODUCTIONS

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

#### **Genesis 15 : 1-12, 17-18**

God's ancient covenant promise to Abram, sealed with a sacrificial offering, was that he would have more descendants than could be counted, and a vast country to call their homeland.

#### **The Psalm - Psalm 27**

A song of assurance for God's protection and care, expressing the longing to live in God's sanctuary and find refuge there. In addition, the psalmist asks for God's mercy and rescue from his enemies.

#### **Philippians 3 : 17 - 4 : 1**

Paul's tone here is rather sharp, telling his Philippians converts to examine their way of life in the light of the cross, and remain faithful to their heavenly hope.

#### **Luke 13 : 31-35**

God's promised Abraham long ago a peaceful and fruitful land for his descendants. In due time, Jerusalem became its centre, and the Temple God's dwelling-place. Jesus laments the way his people have treated this holy gift.

[Click here to view the readings:](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Genesis%2015:%201-12,%2017-18%0Acw%20Psalm%2027%0APhilippians%203:%2017%20-%204:%201%0ALuke%2013:%2031-35](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Genesis%2015:%201-12,%2017-18%0Acw%20Psalm%2027%0APhilippians%203:%2017%20-%204:%201%0ALuke%2013:%2031-35)

### 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

Let us offer prayers to God who gathers holy children for the paschal feast.

*Deacon or other leader*

For this holy gathering, 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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 die for our sins. Receive the prayers we offer this day and prepare us to take up our citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **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

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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.

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 the fulfillment of your promises.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## MEDITATIONS

*Prompts for Meditation from "The Edge of The Enclosure"*

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!  
How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood  
under her wings, and you were not willing!

It's impossible to look over Jerusalem and not lament over her divisions. Has there ever  
been a time when this was not so? But Jerusalem is also the holy city. Abraham Joshua  
Heschel wrote, "Even those who believe that God is everywhere set aside a place for a  
sanctuary. For the sacred to be sensed at all moments everywhere, it must also at this  
moment be somewhere."

In Christian symbolism Jerusalem is everywhere and the ultimate place. Jerusalem is the  
conflicted city within our hearts and the hoped for heavenly city of promise. Jerusalem is  
Earth herself. We lament over the world and our continual warfare and our ongoing  
destruction of land and seas and air. We are the holy place that kills prophets, healers,  
sages and innocents in the complex chaos of our passions.

In this week's meditation, poets yearn for Jerusalem from exile (meditation one). A modern  
lament calls Jerusalem to rise to the challenge of her prophetic power (meditation two).  
Finally, we enter Jesus' own response, opening his arms in love and self-sacrifice  
(meditation three).

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May they prosper who love you. -Psalm 122:6

-Suzanne

### **Meditation One**

would that I had wings, O Jerusalem

Would that I have wings  
that I could wend my way to Thee,  
O Jerusalem, from afar!  
I will make my own broken heart  
find its way amidst your broken ruins.  
I will fall upon my face to the ground,  
for I take much delight in your stones  
and show favor to your very dust.  
The air of your land  
is the very life of our soul.

-Yehudah Halevi c1075-1141

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
let my right hand forget its skill.  
let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth  
if I do not remember you,  
if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.

Psalms 137:5-6

### **Meditation Two**

Key to Jerusalem

Who will fan and force the fire of truth to spread across the world, insisting that we are all one, that mankind is not an animal species but a fellowship of care, a covenant of brotherhood?

There is cursing in the world, scheming, and very little praying. Let Jerusalem inspire praying: an end to rage, an end to violence.

Let Jerusalem be a seat of mercy for all men. Wherever a sigh is uttered, it will evoke active compassion in Jerusalem.

Let there be no waste of history. This must be instilled in those who might be walking in the streets of Jerusalem like God's butlers in the sacred palace. Here no one is more than a guest.

Jerusalem must not be lost to pride or to vanity.

All of Jerusalem is a gate, but the key is lost in the darkness of God's silence. Let us light all the lights, let us call all the names, to find the key.

-Abraham Joshua Heschel 1907-1972 Israel: An Echo of Eternity

### **Meditation Three**

Fox and hen

If you have ever loved someone you could not protect, then you understand the depth of Jesus' lament. All you can do is open your arms. You cannot make anyone walk into them. Meanwhile, this is the most vulnerable posture in the world --wings spread, breast exposed --but if you mean what you say, then this is how you stand. ...

... Jesus won't be king of the jungle in this or any other story. What he will be is a mother hen, who stands between the chicks and those who mean to do them harm. She has no fangs, no claws, no rippling muscles. All she has is her willingness to shield her babies with her own body. If the fox wants them, he will have to kill her first; which he does, as it turns out. He slides up on her one night in the yard while all the babies are asleep. When her cry wakens them, they scatter.

She dies the next day where both foxes and chickens can see her -- wings spread, breast exposed -- without a single chick beneath her feathers. It breaks her heart . . . but if you mean what you say, then this is how you stand.

-Barbara Brown Taylor in Christian Century

## **LECTIONARY NOTES**

### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

This week's readings paint a picture of contrasts. On the one hand, there is the assurance of God's mercy and protection. Abraham receives promises from God of covenant relationships and descendants as numerous as the stars, and the psalmist affirms God's mercy and protection and the joy of living in God's presence and love. In the letter to the Philippians, Paul also indicates that those who follow faithfully are not headed for destruction, like godless people, but for glory. On the other hand the Gospel reading this week shows the persecution Jesus faced as he faithfully followed God's call. A striking feature of this reading is Jesus' refusal to be daunted by the threats against his life, and his determination to continue his mission in spite of the suffering he will face, like the prophets before him. So, the Lectionary, while it assures us that close, protective relationship with God is available to us, also reminds us that the call to live out God's mission does not mean a life free of pain and struggle. The protection we find in God, then, is not a guarantee that no harm will come to us, but a promise that, whatever we may face, we are ultimately destined for glory, and God's strength will sustain us and keep us faithful to the end. In a world of expediency the call to embrace the tough and challenging path of the Gospel can seem out of place, but, if we will trust it and embrace it, we will discover the life that endures through the worst times and that empowers us in the best times.

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** In the quest for justice and to be faithful in following God's call, we can sometimes fall into cynical despair, or shallow optimism which leaves us naive about evil. If we believe our faith and our determination to do "what's right" in God's eyes is a guarantee of safety, we will be sorely disappointed. But, if we can view our relationship with God as a source of strength that enables us to endure the toughest challenges, struggles and conflicts, we will find it to be sufficient. In addition, if we think the world is easily fixed and evil is easily transformed, we delude ourselves. But, if we are able to remain hopeful and committed to transformation, even as we recognise the evil systems and structures that oppose us (as Jesus did) we will be able to face the struggles in our world wisely, optimistically, and creatively. In some sense, though, this commitment may include a call to release our "right to protect ourselves" and like Jesus risk crucifixion even as we seek to reach out to those who hate us.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** There are two truths that we need to balance in our personal journey and as communities of faith. The first is that relationship with God, is a "protection" of sorts from the woes of the world. When we follow Christ, we learn ways to live well – we learn to love others and ourselves, which inevitably creates deeper and more stable relationships; we learn to devote ourselves to God and God's purposes, which offer us

meaning and fulfilment; we learn to refuse to play the games of greed, revenge and abuse of power, which controls our appetites and keeps us from self-destruction; we learn spiritual disciplines which increase our self-care and health. But, there is also a second truth – people who follow Christ are not “better” than others. God’s “blessing” is not a reward for goodness, and suffering and difficulty are not God’s judgment or curse for our sinfulness. The Gospel offers us doorways to life, while ensuring that we know that God has no favourites, and that our call is to invite all others to find life in Christ with us. How do we celebrate the gifts of following Christ, while avoiding the self-righteousness that so often characterizes people of faith? And how can we trust in God’s protection while remaining faithful and hopeful when we are persecuted or when we suffer? Perhaps you can explore that this week.

## SERMON OUTLINE

### Lk 13:31-35 Herod wants to kill you...

Jesus is still in the region of Galilee & Perea - on his way south to Jerusalem - *some Pharisees came to Jesus...*

**1. The WARNING of the Pharisees:-** *Leave this place & go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.* What motivated them? - sincere intentions or a desire to get Jesus out of their area? There were many Pharisees who were devout men of God - committed to faithful service - cf Nicodemus. Probably they had inside information & sought to inform Jesus of the threat to his life.

**2. The WILINESS of Herod:-** Antipas had been appointed Tetrarch of Galilee & Perea on the death of his father Herod Gt in 4AD... Jesus summed up his character well in the light of history:- *Go tell that fox...* - 3 symbolic thoughts ref fox:

- a) it is regarded as the slyest of creatures;
- b) it is thought of as the most destructive of animals;
- c) it represents a worthless & insignificant man...

Jesus will continue his work regardless of threats to his life - *I must keep going - I must reach my goal* - complete my mission!

**3. The WOE of Jesus:** his lament over the city - *O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, you kill the prophets & stone those sent to you...*

**a) his Longing:** *to gather your children together* - soon to be driven apart by the Romans in the Conquest of AD 70...

**b) his Love:** *as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings* - but they rejected such protective love & will have to face the dire consequences - *Your house is left to you desolate - you will not see me again* until I return in glory. You have missed the opportunity to respond to God’s redeeming love

*By Norman Porteous*

## ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

### Go and tell that fox - Sermons that work

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/02/05/bible-study-2-lent-c/>

### I must be on my way - Sermons that work

“Today, tomorrow, and the next day, I must be on my way,” says Jesus in recognition of the fate awaiting him in Jerusalem. Not even the warnings of presumably friendly Pharisees



that “Herod wants to kill you” can dissuade him from his work and mission. His poignant pronouncement over Jerusalem, “the city that kills the prophets,” becomes prophecy of his own death on the cross. “On the third day,” concludes Jesus, “I finish my work.” His journey comes to its end. But his death and resurrection mark also the beginning of faith and redemption for us as his people.

Lent is our annual reminder of this reality – of the lasting covenant that has been forged with us at the cross and of the “land” that has been given to us as our heavenly home. As Paul tells us in our second reading from his Letter to the Philippians, “Our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Abram’s faith in God’s promise was reckoned “to him as righteousness.” Today, our faith in God’s word and promise is reckoned to us as sign and assurance of our true citizenship in heaven.

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2010/02/28/2-lent-c-2010/>

### **The sarcasm of Jesus - Luke 13 - Sermon Central -**

This preacher has been to Jerusalem but it is far from being his favourite city....”many people nonetheless do feel drawn to the city, and not only for sentimental reasons or out of historical interest, but for solid religious reasons. For Jerusalem is indeed the ‘holy city’ for not one but three of the major world religions!

“People come to the holy city because it is a place where holy events took place and where some very special holy people once walked. And millions will testify that you can still sense the presence of the transcendent in that holy city, even though others, like me, sense only the stench of death.

“Certainly, at any rate, I think we could all agree that Jerusalem is a unique city, as our Gospel reading today is a unique passage, for it is, as far as I know, the only recorded incident we have in the life of Jesus where He uses sarcasm...”

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/the-sarcasm-of-jesus-luke-1331-35-david-smith-sermon-on-discipleship-113642.asp>

### **Sarah laughed - Pharisees and Anglicans**

This sermon highlights Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees and includes a useful comment that too often this can be the basis of unthinking anti-semitism. The point is made in a very gracious, non-hectoring manner which includes the finer aspects of the Pharisees expression of belief... “Perhaps it’s because too many of us in the church have forgotten something the Pharisees, like Jesus and his band of squabbling disciples remembered -- that the history of God’s people is of God calling together disparate peoples with different gifts and weaknesses, and forming them into one people, still distinct in gifting and in perspective, still wrestling with scripture and with one another with the vigor that characterized Jacob/Israel’s wrestling with God’s angel, and still called to a common destiny, to do justice and mercy and worship God.

“The Pharisees, with all of their differences from one another as well as from Jesus, have a great deal to teach us at this moment in our life together:” The preacher moves on to illustrate that the christian community would have been much smaller if it had not been able to engage with Pharisees and encompass them in their new community. She comments, “God’s grace is such that God sends God’s Spirit upon us to empower us to do that as the Body of Christ.”Is that a gift you and I are ready to receive? Are our churches in the Anglican Communion and our leaders?”



## The Second Sunday in Lent YEAR C FEBRUARY 21, 2016

[http://www.sarahlaughed.net/lectionary/2007/03/second\\_sunday\\_i.html](http://www.sarahlaughed.net/lectionary/2007/03/second_sunday_i.html)

### CHILDREN

#### **Worshipping with Children, Lent 2C - Carolyn C. Brown**

Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary

<http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/02/year-c-second-sunday-in-lent-february.html>

#### **"There's a Prayer for That: Whom Shall I Fear?" On the Chancel Steps**

<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2013/02/10/lent2fear/>

#### **Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity, Lent 2C, Larry Broding**

<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

### HYMN SUGGESTIONS

And Are We Yet Alive?

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

O God Our Help In Ages Past

How Firm A Foundation

Blessed Be Your Name (YouTube video)

Everlasting God (YouTube video)

God Of Justice (YouTube Video)

You Are God

**Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to [churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com) with the message Passwords in the title**