

READINGS & PSALM

Genesis 12 : 1-4a

Romans 4 : 1-5, 13-17

Matthew 17 : 1-9

INTRODUCTIONS

These may be included in the Parish Magazine, in the weekly service sheet, or by the lector as an introduction to the readings.

Genesis 12 : 1-4a

Last Sunday we heard the sad tale of mankind's first disobedience. This reading is a happier circumstance, with consequences just as far-reaching. God's demand to Abraham is to start anew - to be 'new-born' as Jesus later told Nicodemus. Because Abraham is totally obedient, God's purpose can be in his chosen people.

Romans 4 : 1-5, 13-17

Paul uses Abraham as an example of complete faith. It is not through obedience to law that God accepted and used him, and it is not our good deeds which justify us. By the sheer grace of God we too are inheritors of God's promises.

Matthew 17 : 1-9

The Lord's closest friends see him transfigured upon a mountain-top, in a disclosure of his true identity. In the presence of the figures of Moses and Elijah, a cloud of glory comes upon him and the voice of the holy one is heard.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Trusting in God's assurance that Jesus came not to condemn, but to save, let us lift our voices to God. We pray, "Through the gift of your Son," and respond, "Amen."

Let us pray for the renewal of the church.

God of Abraham and Sarah, renew your church that we might bring the gospel to our present world with relevance and faithfulness. We pray through the gift of your Son, **Amen.**

Let us pray for all who draft environmental policies.

God of All Creation, you have given us life and made the good earth to sustain us. Awaken in our politicians and corporate leaders a sense of awe for your creation, so no one will exploit it as a commodity, but will treasure it as a gift from you. We pray through the gift of your Son, **Amen.**

Let us pray for those struggling with loss of faith.

O Persistent God, you know the depth of our fears and the emptiness of our doubt; you keep faith with us when we have no faith in you. Be with all who struggle under the weight of their questions, that even while their doubt will not go away, they may know that you will not leave them. We pray through the gift of your Son, **Amen.**

Let us pray for our own renewal as children of God.

God of Death and Rebirth, give us new life that we might see your kingdom with clear vision and live with restored courage. As we grow old, may we ever grow

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new in grace. We pray through the gift of your Son, **Amen.**

Bless all for whom we pray, O God, and bring us to newness of life through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Presider or deacon

God sent the Son into the world to save the world. As we prepare for the paschal feast, let us earnestly beseech God to grant all peoples everywhere new birth in the Spirit.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy catholic church throughout the world, a sign on earth of the kingdom of God.

Lord, have mercy.

For *N* our bishop, for presbyters and deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Lord, have mercy.

For *NN* our catechumen(s) and *NN* their sponsors(s), and for all who wish to be born of the Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who share the faith of Abraham, and for all nations and families of the earth.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who are tempted, oppressed, afflicted, or in need.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For our families, friends, and companions, and for all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Remembering *N* (*Parish patronal saint*), 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 Abraham and Sarah, who made of your people a great nation. Receive the prayers we offer this day for all those in need in every place and bless us as we come to your altar; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SERMON STARTERS

Genesis 12:1-4a

"So Abram went" - ah, I can't imagine just up and going like Abram did. What courage he must have had.

Why did he go? God laid out a vision and a promise to him, which Abram found compelling enough to take risks for. As a church, perhaps that is also what we need to do: lay out a compelling vision for where we are going. Then, perhaps, people will have the courage to go with us as we seek to follow God.

"I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse." Not sure how I feel about this. But God is protecting God's promise here, however you look at it. Protecting the vision God wants to see come into fullness. *By Beth Quick*

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

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. "it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace."

Paul is good at emphasizing the heart of saving faith: God's grace. It is not our faith but better stated God's grace alone that saves us. Paul argues that Abraham was justified not by works but by faith, which was credited to him as "righteousness."

"and calls into existence the things that do not exist." God is calling us into existence - I like that, a very process-theology sort of statement. Who is God calling you to be?
By Beth Quick

The Text this Week

<http://www.textweek.com/yeara/lenta2.htm>

John Pridmore's introduction to the readings - Church Times

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=51580>

Sermons that work - uses the narratives of Abram and Sarah, and of Paul, to lead to getting the church 'to think outside the box'... The word "promise" literally means "being sent out" or "sent forth," (the Latin *promittere*)...

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/sermons_that_work_57984_ENG_HTM.htm