

## Home Service for February 28, 2021

### Welcome and Announcements

We are having in person services at 11:15am on Sunday at Trinity and March 7<sup>th</sup> we will be having in person services at 9:30am in Gilbert.

*God's voice names us in holy love. Christ's voice chastens us when we go astray. The spirit's voice draws us back to the paths of righteousness. Thanks be to God!*

### Call to Worship:

Welcome this day to the second step on our Lenten Journey. We come with great hope and expectation as we walk the way of Christ. Today's journey will demand much of us. Lord, make us ready to offer ourselves to you. Come, let us begin again the wondrous excursion. Let us place our lives in God's abiding love. AMEN.

### Opening Prayer:

God, you have given us everything. What can we give in return for our lives? Be our guide on our Lenten journey. Help us to deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow Jesus. We welcome the chastening direction in our lives as we worship you today. Amen.

### Prayer of Confession:

Guiding Lord, even though we hesitated on our Lenten journey; we vowed to come with you through all the trials and fears toward the Cross. Today we face the challenge which true commitment brings. Are we willing to offer our whole selves to you in service? We would like to think that we can do that, but we are aware of how many times we have turned away from service and instead focused on our own desires. Remind us again of the commitment you would have us give if we are to become disciples. Forgive our stubbornness and fears. Lead us forward, gracious Lord, up these steps toward the Cross. AMEN.

### Words of Assurance

*The journey of discipleship is never easy; but you can be assured that you will not be on this journey alone. Place your trust in Jesus. AMEN.*

Read Psalm 22:23-31

- <sup>23</sup> You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!  
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!
- <sup>24</sup> For he has not despised or scorned  
the suffering of the afflicted one;  
he has not hidden his face from him  
but has listened to his cry for help.
- <sup>25</sup> From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;  
before those who fear you<sup>[a]</sup> I will fulfill my vows.
- <sup>26</sup> The poor will eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek the LORD will praise him—  
may your hearts live forever!
- <sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth  
will remember and turn to the LORD,  
and all the families of the nations  
will bow down before him,
- <sup>28</sup> for dominion belongs to the LORD  
and he rules over the nations.
- <sup>29</sup> All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;  
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—  
those who cannot keep themselves alive.
- <sup>30</sup> Posterity will serve him;  
future generations will be told about the Lord.
- <sup>31</sup> They will proclaim his righteousness,  
declaring to a people yet unborn:  
He has done it!

Prayers of the People:

You stop us in our tracks, O Lord, with your reminder that discipleship is not a “sometime” thing. We are called to place our whole lives in your care; to follow you; to serve you by caring for others, not just once in a while, but always. We admit that we’re not always ready to do this. The demand is great; the need is great; our energies are limited. Help us to place our trust and our lives in your care. You will give us the strength and courage that we will need for this step on the journey. Be with us. Help us to remember that your love is poured out for all your people; you are never far away. It is in Jesus’ Name, we pray. AMEN.

## Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty<sup>[a]</sup>; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. <sup>2</sup> Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

<sup>3</sup> Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, <sup>4</sup> “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. <sup>5</sup> No longer will you be called Abram<sup>[b]</sup>; your name will be Abraham,<sup>[c]</sup> for I have made you a father of many nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. <sup>7</sup> I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

<sup>15</sup> God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. <sup>16</sup> I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: Romans 4:13-25

<sup>13</sup> It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. <sup>14</sup> For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, <sup>15</sup> because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. <sup>17</sup> As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.”<sup>[a]</sup> He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

<sup>18</sup> Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>19</sup> Without

weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.<sup>20</sup> Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,<sup>21</sup> being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.<sup>22</sup> This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”<sup>23</sup> The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone,<sup>24</sup> but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.<sup>25</sup> He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 8:31-38

<sup>31</sup> He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.<sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

<sup>33</sup> But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

<sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.<sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life<sup>[a]</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.<sup>36</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

## Message

Today’s scriptures focus on naming, covenant, and faith. With words of covenant and promise, God changes Abram’s name to Abraham, and Sarai’s name to Sarah. The psalmist declares God’s name, beseeching the whole world to come back to God in humble faithfulness. Paul proclaims that God’s promises to Abraham were due to his faith and not the law. In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus reprimands Peter, the rock: “Get behind me, Satan,” for Peter was putting human ways above God’s. We

have to be humble and listen with discerning ears if we are to be found faithful. In these scriptures, new names are symbolic of new journeys, or proclamations of faith, and of promises of covenantal relationship. These texts invite us to remain steadfast in faith during spiritual journeys with God, even as we are transformed by God's call and covenant.

As I read the scripture I felt a strong sense that if you talked about Paul's letter to the Romans we have to also talk about what the Old Testament is telling us at the same time, for they are truly wrapped up in each other. So let us begin. Abraham is called the "father of all believers" in the Scriptures. Beyond all hope, Abraham in hope believed he would be the father of many nations, right in line with what had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Paul says Abraham was "fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised" (v. 21). Abraham believed God created everything, and in particular, life. If God can form Adam and Eve from the dust of the ground, he can form a child from the dust of an old man's seed. God established a covenant with Abraham, the man of faith, and his descendants. God promised to make Abraham "the ancestor of a multitude of nations" (v. 4). By faith in the God of Abraham this literally came to pass. The symbol of this covenant for the Hebrews was circumcision. For Christians, Abraham's children by faith, the symbol of the new covenant is baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are signs of our membership in the covenant community or the covenant family of Abraham.

Abraham accepted the call of God and believed the divine promise. Abraham became the father of nations and forefather of the Messiah. Today, three world religions look to Abraham as the example of faith: Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Abraham was called to have faith in the future just as we are today.

The covenant is one of dual relationship. The Lord promised Abraham's descendants, "I will be their God" (v. 8). We believe that promise to be true not only for the Hebrews but also for Abraham's children by faith, all believers which means you and I. We belong to God, and he is our God.

God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "the ancestor of a multitude." He was destined to become the father of nations. Sarai, Abraham's wife, had her name changed to Sarah, which means "princess." Their new names symbolized their new relationship with God, in response to his covenant promises.

The life and faith of Abraham show us that one person plus God can make a great difference. Abraham believed God's promises and entered into a covenant

relationship with him. The world is different 4,000 years later because of this one man's faith! Can our faith change the world for someone?

The faith journey is one of growth in our understanding of God and growth in his likeness. The life of a believer is one of pilgrimage with a new name and a new goal. Remember that God keeps his covenant promised. God is still calling people to faith and to follow. The word church in Greek literally means "the called out" people of God, in covenant relationship and on mission.

Like Abraham, we often let our reason get in the way of our faith. We walk with fears and sorrow that God doesn't want us to have. But God doesn't want us to despair because of our lack of faith. Instead, he wants to do the same thing with us as he did with Abraham. It's in times of doubt and questioning that we need to go back to the words and promises of God and let them speak to our hearts. Just look at how Paul opens up the arms of God in vs. 25 of today's text - by describing the death and resurrection of Christ. He was delivered over to death because of our sins and was raised to life because of our justification. God's promise is that Jesus was delivered over to death because of our sins. That means that Jesus didn't go to the cross because of his sins or by some chance act of injustice. He specifically was delivered over to death because of our sins - to pay for them and suffer for them. This is the only place that we can find shelter from the wrath of God's law. The promise of the Gospel is that Jesus went to the cross for us. But the second part of the passage is even better. He was raised to life because of our justification - in other words - God promises us that Jesus was raised to life because God declared us not guilty of our sins. Being looked at as holy and righteous does not have to do with the amount of our faith, but the object of our faith - the Lord Jesus Christ - raised from the dead.

Faith, then, takes God's promises at face value. Even though my conscience tells me that I am a sinner, the promise of the Gospel is that God regards me as holy and credits me with the holiness of Christ - through faith in Jesus. If Abraham was credited with righteousness through faith in God's promise of a Savior, and Paul promises me the same, then I also am credited with righteousness through faith in the same Savior. I am saved through faith. So I must be holy. It's these promises that call to us from heaven saying, "trust in Christ! Believe in his blood and righteousness! Turn to him in faith! He paid for all your sins! He made you holy! Believe it!" From today until the time we see God face to face we still have opportunities to grow in our Christian faith. We still have time to hear God's Word, to read God's Word, and to study God's Word so we can appreciate the great, undeserved love God has shown us.

No matter what our situation or station in life, God calls us to fulfill our purpose in God's plan. Abram was ninety-nine years old when God revealed his place in God's scheme. God deemed Abram a righteous man, as Paul tells us, because of the patriarch's faith. So it is with us. As Paul goes on to say, we are held righteous not because of our works but because of our faith in Christ. This is God's covenant with us, a promise that God will fulfill. Amen.

Benediction:

*Go, in God's power that moves through acts of faith.*

*Open your ear to God's divine revelations.*

*Depend on God, who is wise beyond the laws of this land.*

*Do all of these things, so that all that is right and good permeates each day until we meet again. AMEN*