

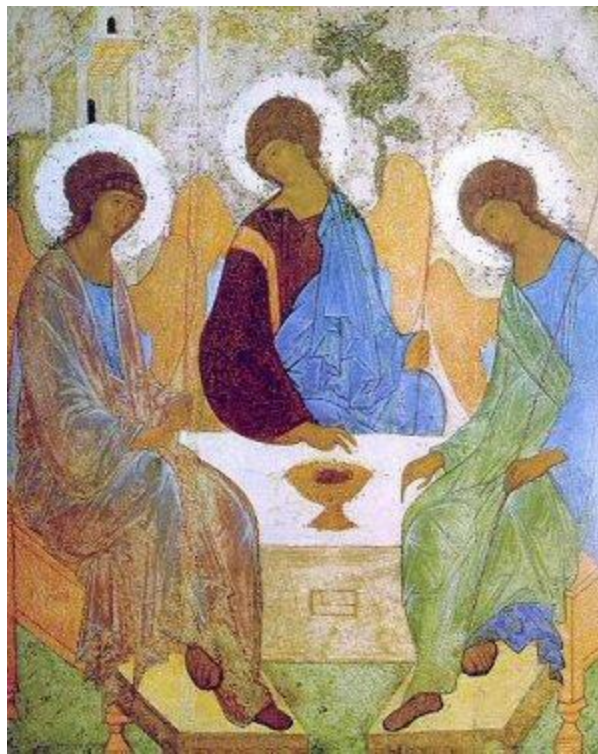
GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

The Second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 6A)

Genesis 18.1-15, 21.1-7 Psalm 116.1, 10-17 Romans 5.1-8 Mtt. 9.35-10.23

Genesis 18.1-15, 21.1-7

- 1) The Abraham saga continues with the story of the LORD appearing to Abraham at Mamre. This story is often referred to as the “hospitality of Abraham,” and is the subject of one of the most famous icons of all time, the 14th C. depiction by Andrei Rublev.



- 2) The LORD appears to Abraham mediated by three “men” (or angels).
 - a) Abraham, like any human, cannot apprehend the true visage of the LORD, and so the LORD appears to him in a form he can understand.
 - i) Note, however, that Abraham addresses the three men by the singular title, “my lord,” but uses a plural pronoun (“yourselves”).
 - ii) Note further, that when the LORD speaks there is one voice, and that in v. 14 He refers to Himself by proper name (the LORD) using the singular.
- 3) This use of language and imagery, like the contrast between the use of the singular word “El” and the plural “elohim” for God in much of the Pentateuch, has been traditionally seen as referring to the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- 4) Despite the age of Abraham and Sarah, the LORD is faithful to His promise, and brings forth the son, Isaac.
 - a) The name Isaac derives from the Hebrew *yishaq*^[el], “May God laugh in delight (or smile upon,” a play on the laughter which takes place at vv. 12-15, when the promise of a son is made.

Psalm 116.1, 10-17

- 1) An individual psalm of thanksgiving. Part II of the psalm (from which vv. 10-17 come) focuses on the faith and loyalty of the psalmist, stated as vows.
 - a) This comes after the first part of the psalm which focuses on the personal distress of the psalmist in illness.
- 2) In v. 15 the psalmist “will call upon the Name of the LORD.” This parallels the same call referenced in v. 2.
 - a) In v. 2 the call was made out of fear; in v. 15 as one of praise in thanksgiving.
 - i) The LORD hears our cries.
- 3) V. 13 is difficult. Just why should the “death of His servants” be precious to God?
 - a) A traditional interpretation is that God calls His own to Himself.

Romans 5.1-8

- 1) Paul focuses on the central theme of all his theology: The love of God assures salvation to those justified by faith.
 - a) The beginning of ch. 5 states the theme succinctly: The justified Christian, reconciled to God, will be saved, sharing with hope in Christ’s risen life.
- 2) We enjoy peace. Reconciliation replaces estrangement, because we have been introduced into the sphere of divine favor through Jesus.
 - a) Standing in the relationship with God, we have a confident hope.
 - b) The hope of God’s glory is not illusory. It is founded on God’s love.
 - i) This is proven by the fact that while we were still helpless, in sin, God sent His Son to make atonement for us.
 - ii) There is no *quid pro quo* in God’s love. His love is manifested to the sinner even though the sinner is estranged from Him.
 - iii) We are justified through Jesus’ blood and our faith in His saving grace.

Matthew 9.35-10.23

- 1) This Gospel selection begins with the very end of a long section in which Jesus’ authority is both questioned and demonstrated, and continues into Jesus’ mission discourse, in which He instructs the disciples of their mission to the world, and of the troubles that will accompany the proclamation of the kingdom of heaven.
 - a) The ending verses from ch. 9 are transitional. The mission discourse begins in ch. 10.

- 2) Jesus' address to His disciples is framed in a way to make it clear that it is also addressed to all believers.
 - a) Jesus, nonetheless, is described as giving "authority" to the named twelve disciples.
 - i) This authority, this commissioning to act as a vessel or medium of grace from God, is the basis for "apostolic succession" in churches which recognize Holy Orders as a sacrament (*e.g.*, in the Anglican churches, in the Church of Rome, and in the Eastern Orthodox churches).
- 3) The message of the apostles is to be the same as that of Jesus and John the Baptist: "The kingdom of heaven is near."