

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

The Second Sunday in Lent (C)

Genesis 15.1-12, 17-18

Psalms 27.10-18

Philippians 3.17-4.1

Luke 13.22-35

Genesis 15.1-12, 17-18

- 1) Abraham is promised a son and land by the LORD. These promises should be read together, as blessings of posterity and inheritance.
 - a) In each case, the promise is at first not accepted.
 - i) Abraham greets the promise of a son with a complaint.
 - ii) Abraham greets the promise of land with a request for a sign.
 - b) The LORD responds differently each time.
 - i) To the complaint with a sign (the stars in the heavens).
 - ii) To the request for a sign with an oath (in the form of an ancient “suzerainty treaty” or covenant).
- 2) Abraham responds to God’s promise of an heir (and to the sign of this) by believing. His faith pleases the LORD, being “reckoned ... to [Abraham] as righteousness.”
 - a) Righteousness should be considered as worthiness to stand before the Creator.
- 3) The ritual cutting in two of animals (compare Jer. 34.18) is a ceremony of an ancient treaty between an overlord and vassal. The same fate (being cut in two) is attested to by the vassal, should he fail in the oath.
 - a) The vassal ratifies the covenant by passing between the animals which have been cut in two (as the one who will be cut in the event of failure of oath!) However, here, it is the overlord, the LORD who ratifies the covenant. This testifies to the character of God as the God who always keeps His covenant.
 - i) In the ancient world, it would be noticed immediately that the overlord is binding Himself.

Psalms 27.10-18

- 1) The overall structure of psalm 27 is one of: statement of trust (vv. 1-9); individual lament (vv. 10-14); and conclusion (vv. 15-18).
 - a) Parallels in structure and content may be noted to psalm 23.
- 2) The verses selected for this lesson speak of the troubles befalling the psalmist, and how he seeks refuge in the LORD.
 - a) V. 11 may be a reference to “prevenient grace” (the grace by which calls plants in us a desire to seek Him): Here it is God who says to the psalmist, “Seek my face.”

Philippians 3.17-4.1

- 1) Philippi was the scene of Mark Antony’s defeat of Brutus and Cassius in 31 B.C. It was a prosperous town populated by retired Roman soldiers, and thus a Gentile town *par excellence*.
 - a) The town enjoyed a privileged status as a self-governing Roman *colonia*. (Cf. Acts 16.12.) Roman, not local, law applied.

- b) No Jewish synagogue existed in Philippi.
- 2) Paul wrote his letter to Philippi while in prison.
 - a) The lesson here follows immediately on a section in which Paul warns against false teachers; those who would impose a form of Judaism as the essence of the Christian faith.
 - 3) The reference here to “enemies of the cross” refers to the false teachers, of the previous section of ch. 3. They are enemies of the cross in that they would ignore Jesus’ self-sacrifice by requiring another rite (circumcision) which denies the efficacy of Jesus’ sacrifice.
 - a) Their “god is the belly” may be a reference either to the exclusive practices of Jewish dietary laws or, more probably, to selfishness in general.
 - 4) All that belongs to the old age has been superseded by Christ. Therefore, to require observance of the old Jewish Law is to dwell on “earthly things”.
 - 5) “[O]ur citizenship is in heaven”: The not-yet-fully-arrived-in-the-kingdom Christians are enrolled already as citizens of the “heavenly city” (cf. Gal 4.24-27; Eph. 2.19).
 - a) Early Christians described themselves using language used to describe aliens resident in a land: *paroikoi* and *xenoi*:
 - i) 1 Peter 2:11, “Beloved, I beseech you as aliens (*xenoi*) and exiles (*paroikoi*).” Thus, the world was viewed not as a homeland but as a foreign country. (Cf. Heb . 11.9, Abraham as a *sojourner* as a model of faith.)
 - (1) The same terminology is used by St. Clement of Rome, writing to the Corinthians in A.D. 96.

Luke 13.22-35

- 1) Jesus begins the second part of His instruction on the meaning of the Christian way (in Luke found at 13.22-17.10) with an emphasis laid on the need for repentance.
 - a) Mere association with Jesus as a fellow traveler of the Church (“eating and drinking with Him”) is not enough.
 - i) Allegiance to Jesus and His way is required.
 - b) In this way (or Way) companions from all over the globe join us: “[P]eople will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God.”
 - i) Note that Christians will be in the “kingdom,” and dwell no longer as “resident aliens”.
- 2) The door will be “shut” to those who were content with boasting that were acquainted with Jesus and His message.
 - a) Casual eating and drinking with Him is not enough. One must share in His life.
 - i) Part of this sharing is symbolized by Jesus’ table fellowship with the lowly: “the last who will be first,” etc.
- 3) In v. 31, the tone shifts. Jesus now continues, obediently, His journey to Jerusalem and death.
 - a) “[S]ome Pharisees” warn Jesus. This is the only positive reference to the Pharisees in Luke.
 - b) Jesus refers to Herod [Antipas] as a “fox”. He does not hesitate to criticize the Roman social order.
 - c) Jesus accepts the Father’s will, saying “I *must* be on my way ...”

- d) Jesus uses the image of a hen gathering her brood under her wings to signify His compassion for His people.
 - i) It is popular in Feminist theology to argue that God's female side is here signified. Leaving aside the issue of any association of gender with God, the allusion may be seen here in context to be simple metaphor.