

The Second Sunday in Lent
February 28, 2021
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-15
Psalm 22:22-30
Romans 4:13-25
Mark 8:31-38

Title: Seek Ye the Lord

It is in this solemn penitential season of Lent, the most important time in the Christian faith, that we are given another chance to open ourselves up to ask God to Create in us a clean heart and to renew a right spirit within us. (Psalm 51:11). Lent gives us the opportunity to reflect on our relationship with God and each other; it is a time to seek forgiveness and healing as we focus on the Gift of Love given to us through Jesus. Today's Scripture Readings hopefully will help open our hearts to what God is calling each of us to do for a life in Christ.

The story in Genesis tells of the Covenant God made with Abraham and Sarah and their strong faith in the goodness of God. Paul in his Letter to the Romans expands on the Faith that both Abraham and Sarah had in God and her Promise to them that they would inherit the world. Such Faith is what God desires for each of us, but as we know, nothing that is worthwhile comes easy it is something that we have to work on all the time.

In the passage from Mark's Gospel, Jesus is once again reminding his disciples that he must undergo great suffering, that he will be rejected by all the religious Leaders, be killed and will Rise again after three days. Let us be honest, this is hard news for anyone to hear much less your very close friends. Of course it is Peter who is brave enough to confront Jesus, and Jesus rebukes Peter by saying, ***'Get behind me Satan, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but only on human things.'***

What I like about Scripture is that every time we read the same passage the Holy Spirit opens us up to see a different meaning, and I find that this is what makes Scripture so interesting to study. As I was reading the story in Mark's Gospel yet again, the story of Peter trying to save Jesus from what was already destined to happen to him, brought to mind a similar personal story I would like to share with you.

It is about this time five years ago when my late husband, David, made a decision about his life. David had many serious health issues among them kidney disease, COPD and early dementia. David's kidney doctor told him that there was nothing further they could do for him as being on daily dialysis for six years was past the

usual time for people doing this procedure. David realized that the quality of his life was rapidly deteriorating so he gave serious thought and prayer in making the decision to go on hospice. As Peter's first reaction to what would happen to Jesus was definitely human thoughts, so were mine when David spoke to me about going on hospice. Maybe Jesus rebuked me too in order for me to look beyond my human feelings to be able to accept David's decision and to honor his wish, so that I could truly believe that God was guiding David to make this decision.

Like Peter, it is very hard for us to hear that the person closest to us is going to leave us and our first thought is indeed a very human thought. Anyone who has been through a similar situation can well understand how it feels.

It is hard for us humans not to think about our human way of life that is so embedded in us, that we lose sight of what is beyond ourselves to see the Divine things that Christ is pointing us toward. Jesus says that if we want to become one of his followers, we are to deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow him; we are to look beyond our human way of life to seek what is divine. So if we have made the choice to follow Jesus by our attendance at Church each week, it means that we are seeking something more for our life as we look to Jesus the Divine. It is up to each of us to make the commitment to a life with Christ as we take up the cross that Jesus is offering us.

When we are able to do this it fills us with a life of Hope, Love, Peace and Joy that sustains us through our doubts and fears, through our pain and suffering as we keep our eyes on meaningful things, the divine things that Jesus is offering.

It takes discipline in order to follow Jesus and I recently read a verse in the Book of Hebrews which says, and I quote, "discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained in it." We learn that it does take discipline in our daily life to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and when we fall away, we start all over again. Christ desires this of us, and we come to realize that it is the hard things we do that gives us the most Joy.

We have all been through the struggles of this Pandemic which finally looks like there is light at the end of this long dark tunnel with the hope of everyone being vaccinated. Hopefully we have learned from this time of isolation, death, and all the ugly injustices that have been brought to light. We, as people of God, are now called to take action to do something about all the situations that have been exposed during this time so that all God's children are allowed to live a decent humane life that gives them Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. For us to sit back and do nothing is to deny taking up our cross.

So as we continue on our Lenten journey with Christ, we open our heart to yet again seek God. I would like to share part of a Reflection from the book ***Meditations of the Heart*** by Howard Thurman. This Meditation is called, **“Seek Ye the Lord.”**

“This day I seek the Lord. I seek to know God that I may understand myself, that I may grasp the true meaning of my own life and have its purpose increasingly defined. I seek God’s judgment that I may discern an ever clearer meaning between right and wrong courses of conduct. I seek God’s Love that I may be inspired to love more and more what is good and true, and to transcend all barriers which stand between me and my fellows. Therefore, Seek ye the Lord while He is near.”

My friends in Christ may this Lent be one of enlightenment and courage as we look to Jesus to do the right thing as we stir ourselves from a place of contentment and comfort to listen to where God is calling each of us as we take up our cross to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ our Savior.

AMEN.