
Sunday 28 February – Second Sunday of Lent

Readings: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 & Mark 8:31-end

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

The Covenant of Circumcision

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

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 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.

God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. 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.”

Mark 8:31-end

Jesus Predicts His Death

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. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

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.”

The Way of the Cross

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.

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 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."

Reflection

Abram knew God. They have spoken before. Abram has followed God, and seen God provide for him and his family. They have had frank conversations and God has answered Abram's prayers. Today we read that God appears before Abram again.

'I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless'

It's like God's reminding Abram of who He is. Even though they've talked. Even though Abram has seen God do amazing and wonderful things in his life, God still reminds Abram of who He (God) is.

Do you need reminding again today of who God is?

'I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless'.

What does the name 'God Almighty' conjure for you? It makes me think of what God has created, and His power. It reminds me of the promises that he has made to his people and to me personally. It reminds me that he is jealous for me. That he loves me. That he has rescued and saved me. And that he calls me to be holy.

Given that this Holy, Powerful, Loving God is speaking, when he says 'walk before me and be blameless'... it makes me think that I probably should. I definitely want to.

It got me thinking about walking before someone. There is so much imagery in this. If you think of a toddler just learning to walk, you make them go ahead of you so that you can see their obstacles and help them overcome them. You're bigger and taller so you can see what's coming. You are aware of things that they aren't. If they stumble you will catch them. Your eyes are on what's ahead as well as on them.

When this child is a bit older and riding their bike on the road. They go before you so that you can see they're doing it correctly! You need to watch that they are staying next to the pavement, slowing down when approaching a junction, signalling before turning. In some ways, you are watching to see if they are ready – if they're blameless.

This is what I think of when I think of walking before God and being blameless. I know that I'm not blameless. And this is a great reminder that God is walking right

behind me. In a safe and supportive way, to catch me when I fall, but also his eyes are upon my choices and my actions.

As we read on we see God give Abram the covenant – the promise to be our God forever, and that we will be His people. We inherit this promise.

We can see with hindsight that this promise is indeed true. Abram was the father of many nations, even though it looked unlikely then. The fact that God's word is true time and time again in the Bible means that it is solid. It is true for us too.

I think that's how our second passage is connected. Peter did not like what Jesus was saying about being killed and began to rebuke him; obviously, this did not go down well, and Jesus rebukes him. It must have been awful for Peter to have Jesus say 'Get behind me Satan' to him. But I wonder if the problem was Peter not accepting God's will.

God's word is true, even when it is uncomfortable, and does not fit into the way that we like things to be. Again, with hindsight we can see that Jesus' predictions were correct. Jesus said in verse 34 'whoever wants to be my disciple must take up their cross and follow me'. I think we have to carry all the parts of God's word that we don't understand, or that we don't like, and hold onto it in the same way that we hold onto the bits that we do like and we do understand.

As we follow Jesus, grappling with the difficult stuff, we know that God is right behind us. He is asking us to live our lives with Him. Let's invite Him into our day, and ask the Holy spirit to guide us.

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