

Lessons for The First Sunday in Lent

February 18, 2018

Psalm 25:1–10 ~ *David expressed his trust in God as he sought deliverance from his enemies*

Genesis 22:1–18 – *God counted faithful Abraham righteous and spared his son.*

James 1:12–18 – *God has given us spiritual birth to guard us against the temptations of our evil hearts.*

Mark 1:9–15 – *After Jesus was baptized and tested by Satan, he returned proclaiming the Good News.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: "In the Hour of Trial"

Put yourself in Abraham's place: aside from the painful prospect of losing his son of promise by his own hand, he faced the difficult task of explaining his actions to Sarah when he returned home! God spared Isaac, Abraham's son, but He did not spare His own Son. The steadfastness of God's protecting love is seen in Jesus' temptation in the desert and His subsequent proclamation of the Kingdom of God present in His person. While desire, full grown, gives birth to death, God's Word of truth in us bears the first fruits of the crown of life.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Merciful Father, temptations and trials come upon me every day, but yet You hold me with the love of a father for his child and the new birth into faith that You have given me shields me from the temptations of my own heart. Let that knowledge make me strong to resist evil and to rejoice in Your care always beside me. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: When our desire for things is greater than our love for God, the temptations of Satan find easy prey in our old sinful hearts. The Good News of God's Kingdom is that Jesus has broken the hold of Satan over us; we are free to trust God's promise of Life instead bowing to Satan's death claim on us.

OFFERING PRAYER: O Lord, when we make promises to gain your blessing remind us that you have blessed us in your promising. Bless the gifts we bring today; may they carry your promise of Life to those who don't yet know your blessing in Jesus Christ. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: We are tempted in many ways every day and by ourselves are powerless to stand against Satan's onslaught, but God holds us with the love of a father for his child. The new birth of faith that we have through our baptism shields us from the temptations of our own hearts. Our relationship to God in Christ makes us strong to resist evil and to rejoice in His care always beside us.

BONUS: Abraham: Priest of Moriah

God called on Abraham to make
A dreadful sacrifice,
But in His mercy would not take
The dear son, Isaac's life --
The dear son, Isaac's life.

Instead the Lord chose to provide
A ram as substitute;
An angel stopped the knife and cried:
"I know your faith is true --
I know your faith is true!"

O God the Father glorify,
Who did not spare His Son,
But willingly gave Him to die
To win us as His own --
To win us as His own!

– Gilbert A. Franke, 2000
(May be sung to LSB 389
"Let All Together Praise Our God")

BONUS: To Take Your Place

When Abraham was told to sacrifice
his son, God saw his faith and stopped the knife.
That very day He blessed old Abram twice:
He gave a ram, and spared young Isaac's life.
Another Child of promise, born one night
two thousand years ago, is God's own Son,
beloved and precious in His Father's sight,
the Savior of the world, God's chosen One.
God did not spare His only Son but gave
Him up for you and me; and now along
with Him, His mighty hand is strong to save
all those who trust in Christ to conquer wrong.
God gave His holy Lamb to take your place
so you may stand forgiven in His Grace.

Gilbert A. Franke, 2000