

Sunday, March 16, 2025 – Second Sunday in Lent

First Reading: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Genesis 15: 1-4 - After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir."

A. W. Toser – A "low view" of God reduces God to the size of our biggest problem, our greatest fear, and/or our worst sin.

Do you have a low view or a high view of God?

What does this sentence say to you?

Our biggest problem is when we do not think that God is bigger than our biggest problem.

Challenge for this week –

Write out some areas in your life where you have a low view of God.

Commit at least one of those areas to God and ask Him to change you.

Genesis 15: 5 - He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

When have you been staring at a human-made ceiling that kept you from seeing the promises of God?

How could the stars be nightly reminders of God's promises for you?

When have you put an eight-foot-high ceiling on what God can do?

What eight-foot-high ceiling are you staring at right now?

How do you feel about desert darkness?

When our surroundings are the darkest, the stars and God's promises shine the brightest.

Genesis 15: 6 - And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Romans 4: 18-22 – Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness."

Are you fully convinced that God is able to do what He has promised?

How does Abraham's faith encourage you when you are facing the seemingly impossible?

Genesis 15: 7-10 - Then he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other.

God made use of a custom of the day that Abraham would have been very familiar with from the surrounding cultures – cutting a covenant. (Cf. how we speak of cutting a deal) Animals would be cut in two. The lesser or weaker party in the covenant would pass through in between the pieces. The idea was that what happened to the animals would happen to the lesser or weaker parties if they did not live up to the terms of the covenant.

Genesis 15: 12-16 - As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation."

God's promises would be good even during the toughest of times – the four hundred years of slavery in Egypt.

What would it mean to you if God were to tell you that you will die in peace and that you will live to a good old age?

Genesis 15: 17-18 - When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates."

This is totally remarkable. It is not Abram, the lesser or weaker party in the covenant relationship, that passes between the parts of the animal, but God, the greater and more powerful party.

God is willing to go to that extent to assure Abram that He will keep His promises.

What has God done to assure you that He will keep His promises to you?

Psalm: Psalm 27

If you were a citizen of Ukraine, how would you hear, read, and experience these verses?

- 1 - The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- 2 - When evildoers close in against me to devour my flesh,
they, my foes and my enemies, will stumble and fall.
- 3 - Though an army encamp against me, my heart will not fear.
Though war rise up against me, my trust will not be shaken.
- 13 - This I believe—that I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!
- 14 - Wait for the LORD and be strong. Take heart and wait for the LORD!

Second Reading: Philippians 3:17--4:1

3: 17 - Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us.

Cf. 1 Corinthians 11: 1 – Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

People need examples to follow of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

What in your life would you like to change – do you need to change – so that you are a good example to follow?