

Notes for Next Sunday

Second Sunday in Lent

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16). Abraham and Sarah receive both a new name and the sign of the covenant promise God had given His people. The Lord received the same sign of circumcision, shedding His infant blood and receiving the name "Jesus," proving Himself to be our dear Savior.

Epistle (Romans 5:1-11). We naturally seek to avoid pain and suffering. Yet, there are times when suffering is unavoidable. Focused on Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, we know that suffering is not the whole story. God will use afflictions for our good and to bless others. He will keep His promises, and we will overcome our sufferings by faith.

Gospel (Mark 8:27-38). For the first time in Mk, one of the Twelve recognizes Jesus as the Christ, God's Anointed One. How slow we are and how dull is our understanding of Jesus' divinity! We see and yet do not see. And so it is that Jesus graciously continues revealing Himself to us through Word and Sacrament. His Spirit works in us the faith that claims, "Jesus is the Christ." Jesus warns that He has come to suffer, die, and rise and that everyone who follows Him must carry the cross. Temptation to avoid the anguish of the cross is great. A safe life tempts us to deny Christ and His cross. Yet, Jesus suffered for our salvation and promised to overcome Satan and all our foes. Jesus is the only one sufficient to exchange His life for ours.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. ²I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." ³Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ⁴"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷I 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. ¹⁵God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶I 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."

17:1 ninety-nine years old. It was now twenty-four years since God had first appeared to Abram with the promise that he would be the ancestor of the Savior. Humanly speaking, every shred of hope they had of ever becoming parents had been swept away. Martin Luther once made the statement: "It's God's way to empty a man first before filling him with His blessing." (PBC)

17:1 God Almighty. The Hebrew (*El-Shaddai*) perhaps means "God, the Mountain One," either highlighting the invincible power of God or referring to the mountains as God's symbolic home (see Ps 121:1). It was the special name by which God revealed himself to the patriarchs (see Ex 6:3). *Shaddai* occurs 31 times in the book of Job and 17 times in the rest of the Bible. (CSB)

17:1 walk before me and be blameless. Luther: "What else did God want than that Abraham should continue in the righteousness and faith because of which he had been declared righteous and that he should be uncorrupted, blameless, and perfect?" (AE 3:78). (TLSB)

17:2 covenant. God's blessings and promises are always new. He had already made His covenant with Abram. He added a name (v. 5) and a sign (vv 10-11) by which Abram is to be sure that the original promise has not been forgotten. (TLSB)

17:5 Abram ... Abraham. "Abram" means "exalted father," but "Abraham" means "father of many nations." God added a new name to the patriarch, that by it he might be ever mindful of the promise. (TLSB)

17:15 Sarai ... Sarah. Both names evidently mean "princess." The renaming stressed that she was to be the mother of nations and kings (see v. 16) and thus to serve the Lord's purpose. (CSB)

17:16 become nations. Ultimately fulfilled by our Lord as He made disciples of all nations through Baptism and teaching (Mt. 28:19-20). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Romans 5:1-11

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.³ Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.⁵ And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

5:2 access. Jesus ushers us into the presence of God. The heavy curtain (of the temple) that separated man from God and God from man has been removed (see note on Mt 27:51). (CSB)

5:2 hope of the glory of God. The Christian's confidence that the purpose for which God created him will be ultimately realized. (CSB)

5:3 rejoice in our sufferings. Not "because of" but "in." Paul does not advocate a morbid view of life but a joyous and triumphant one. (CSB)

5:5 hope does not disappoint us. The believer's hope is not to be equated with unfounded optimism. On the contrary, it is the blessed assurance of our future destiny and is based on God's love, which is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit and objectively demonstrated to us in the death of Christ. (CSB)

5:6 Christ died for the ungodly. Christ's love is grounded in God's free grace and is not the result of any inherent worthiness found in its objects (mankind). In fact, it is lavished on us in spite of our undesirable character. (CSB)

5:7 righteous man ... good man. Human love generally doesn't extend to the point of a person's dying for his neighbor. What doesn't happen among people, God did. (PBC)

5:10 God's enemies.† The hostility between God and man must be removed if reconciliation is to be accomplished. God brought this about through the death of his Son. (CSB)

5:11 we have now received reconciliation. Reconciliation, like justification (v. 1), is a present reality for Christians and is something to rejoice about. (CSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 8:27-38

27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” 28 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” 29 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” 30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. 31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 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 things of God, but the things of men.” 34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life^a will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

8:27 *Caesarea Philippi*. Northernmost Galilean city Jesus visited, 25 miles north of Bethsaida, in the largely Gentile region of the Sea of Galilee. (TLSB)

8:31 *began* The time had come for the impending Passion to be presented to the disciples in a straightforward way. They still have in mind the things of men and glory. The theology of the cross was a necessity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

8:31 *after three days*. He also added a note of final victory. But this the disciples constantly forgot, so shocked were they by the fact that he, their Lord and Master, would suffer and die. That’s why the resurrection actually took them by surprise. These words at first glance seem to be in accordance with the fact that “on” the third day Christ rose from the dead. However, this was the Hebrew way of speaking. “After three days” did not necessarily mean after three full days, but the passing of parts of three days. (PBC)

8:32 *Peter ... began to rebuke him*. Peter will not accept a suffering Christ until after the resurrection. Like most Jews of his day, Peter expects a powerful warrior and conquering Messiah. Ironically, Jesus has been the one to silence others (cf. 1:25-26). Now, however, Peter tries to silence Jesus. (TLSB)

8:33 *Satan*. The refusal to accept God’s plan of having Jesus die for all is devilish, for it threaten to undo the divine plan of salvation. (TLSB)

8:33 *do not have in mind the things of God*. This inability to accept a suffering Savior involves the refusal of the will of God, whose sovereign disposition of the problem of sin and human rebellion fails to conform to the niceties of human expectations. Jesus shows no inclination to justify the ways of God to men. He simply affirms that the way of the cross is the will of God. (Lane)

8:34 *called the crowds to him*. By doing this Jesus indicates that the conditions for following him are relevant for all believers, and not for the disciples alone. (Lane)

8:34 *take up his cross*. The picture is of a man, already condemned, required to carry the beam of his own cross to the place of execution. Cross-bearing is a willingness to suffer and die for the Lord’s sake. – The cross was an instrument of death, and the phrase “take up his cross” refers to hardships and even death suffered as a result of being a follower of Jesus. While many today use the phrase “bearing a cross” to

refer to everything from illnesses to layoffs, the phrase is properly used to refer to suffering which occurs as a direct result of the Christian faith. (CSB)

8:35 save his life. The mystery of Jesus' suffering for the life of the world turns upside down everything the disciples know and imagine. In order to save their lives they must be willing to give them up. (TLSB)

8:36 the whole world. In developing the thought of the supreme value of life in its deepest sense, Jesus employed language drawn from commercial life: profit, gain, loss, give in exchange. A comparison of values is the proper setting for a consideration of profit and loss. Corresponding to the advantage gained – the whole world – is the payment which must be forfeited – authentic life. But the ledger involves values which cannot really be compared. The loss even of ordinary human life is in no way compensated by winning the world; how much more is this true of eternal life! (Lane)

8:38 ashamed of me and my words. Contrast Ro 1:16. A person who is more concerned about fitting into and pleasing his own “adulterous and sinful generation” than about following and pleasing Christ will have no part in God's kingdom. (CSB)