



GOD'S WORD FOR THIS WEEK

Sunday 5th July 2020

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect of the Day

O God, the protector
of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing
is holy:

Increase and multiply
upon us your mercy;
that with you as our ruler
and guide,

we may so pass
through things temporal
that we finally lose not
the things eternal:
Grant this, heavenly Father,

for Jesus Christ's sake, our Lord.

The First Reading- Genesis 24: 34-38, 42-49, 58-67

34 So he said, 'I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵The Lord has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. ³⁶And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and he has given him all that he has. ³⁷My master made me swear, saying, "You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; ³⁸but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son."

42 'I came today to the spring, and said, "O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! ⁴³I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, 'Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,' ⁴⁴and who will say to me, 'Drink, and I will draw for your camels also' —let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master's son."

45 'Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water-jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, "Please let me drink." ⁴⁶She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, "Drink, and I will also water your camels." So I drank, and she also watered the camels. ⁴⁷Then I asked her, "Whose daughter are you?" She said, "The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him." So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. ⁴⁸Then I bowed my head and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. ⁴⁹Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left.' ⁵⁸And they called Rebekah, and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' She said, 'I will.' ⁵⁹So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. ⁶⁰And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, 'May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes.'

⁶¹Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 Now Isaac had come from* Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. 63 Isaac went out in the evening to walk* in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. 64 And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, 65 and said to the servant, 'Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?' The servant said, 'It is my master.' So she took her veil and covered herself. 66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

This reading today continues the story of Abraham and Isaac's lineage as founding members of the Jewish faith. What is really apparent in the past three weeks now, is the depth of trust in following God and the clear recognition of God's presence in the lives of these people. This week's reading indicates that there is no such thing as co-incidence or chance when it comes to God. How committed are we to rely completely on God and how communicative are we with him about our hopes, our dreams and our challenges? Are we able to ask and then take the time to wait and watch for God's hand at work in our circumstances? God is at work every bit as much today in our lives as in the lives of Rebekah and Isaac.

The Epistle - Romans 7: 15-25a

15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 17 But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

Nobody said it would be easy to follow God or Christ. We are born into a dualistic world and sometimes the knowledge of what is right in any circumstance is no guarantee that we will follow the right path. This is what it is to be human, described so beautifully in the Garden of Eden and the temptation. We are constantly making choices within our own lives and the writer of Romans this week, gives us permission to put up our hand and admit that we are enslaved to many bad decisions and actions. That said, it is never too late to 'change your heart' (Metanoia). This is what Jesus urged those who followed him. In changing our heart we are allowing God to enter into circumstances that seem beyond our control, and to redeem them. In our mistakes we grow and God is a forgiving God who is always ready to listen.

THE GOSPEL - Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

16 'But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another,

17 "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn."

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon"; 19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.'

25 At that time Jesus said, 'I thank* you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your

gracious will.* ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Here again we witness the dualistic way of thinking 'black or white' and 'right or wrong'. If we allow ourselves to be so utterly focused on one or the other we are pulled from one side of the market place to the other and within this uncertainty dwells fear. Fear and love cannot co-exist. Have we the ability to be child-like in our openness and vulnerable to each moment? Again, becoming like a child is opening your heart the way it was when you were free of