

Devotional Commentary on the Lenten Readings for Week 2

Lent Theme: Healed and Transformed by Grace to Re-imagine the New Church

Weekly Theme: Healed and Transformed by Grace when we cry out and Lament in Times of Tribulation and Trial

Overview of the Week

Nothing that God has created or that God permits is without Divine purpose. God is faithful and as we read in Romans 8:28, God's plans are not to harm us, but to work for good in all things for those who love the Lord and keep His commands. Our trust and hope are in God. On Sunday we renewed our Covenant with God, at which time we acknowledged God's absolute sovereignty in our lives. We prayerfully undertook to accept and submit to God's will, no matter what living in true and faithful Covenantal discipleship and complete surrender might cost us.

God invites us to bring our challenges and suffering to Him in honest prayer and to accept the restoring Grace that is intrinsic to God's merciful nature as Jehovah Rapha, our healer – physically, mentally, emotionally and Spiritually. God wants that which is best and will bring transformation and renewal for each one of us, into the Kingdom purpose for which He created us. Glory to God Who loves us so deeply that He gave His beloved Son to die for us on the Cross of Calvary and invites us into fellowship with Himself.

DAY 7:

Wed 24 Feb - ***Psalm 77; Proverbs 30:1-9; Matthew 4:1-11***

Psalm 77 reminds us that we can bring our lament, our sorrow, our distress and struggle to God in prayer, also encouraging us to look back and remember what God has done in our lives and to draw comfort from His past goodness and mercy towards us. Agur asks God, in a simple prayer of trust and faith, to keep falsehood away from him and to give him his daily bread – nothing more, nothing less, that his life may honour God. We see in the account of Jesus's experience of testing in the wilderness that Jesus turned immediately to Scripture to counter the attacks of Satan. Is God's word of truth engraved on our minds and from there imprinted on our hearts, that it may spring readily to our lips?

DAY 8:

Thu 25 Feb – ***Ps 22:23-31; Gen 15:1-6, 12-18; Rom 3:21-31***

Today as we read of the Abrahamic Covenant instituted by God and obeyed and honoured by Abraham through faith, trust and endurance in times of extreme testing, we reflect again on our own Covenantal relationship with God and revisit the difficult promises we made during our Covenant service. God knows our challenges and torment in faithfully honouring His will for our lives and freely extends unmerited Grace to us when we bring our struggles, hurts and failures to Him in humble, heartfelt prayer. Scripture tells us that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, because of God's saving Grace, when we believe and surrender our lives completely to the Sovereignty of Jesus.

DAY 9:

Fri 26 Feb – *Ps 22:23-31; Gen 16:1-6; Rom 4:1-12*

In situations where our faith falters, as with Abram and Sarai, God remains faithful and when we surrender our pride and wilfulness to Him, He will undertake for us. (see Ps 22:31, cf 1 Thes 5:24). Just as Abraham was justified, or put right with God, by faith and belief, and not by what he did, so we are assured that our Salvation in Christ is by faith, which leads to works of love, but those works can never earn us Salvation – they are a result of God's healing and transformation stemming from our belief and faith in Jesus as Saviour.

DAY 10:

Sat 27 Feb – *Ps 22:23-31; Gen 16:7-15; Mark 8:27-30*

In the second half of Psalm 22, consider the verbs used by the Psalmist in response to God's Grace and mercy in listening to his lament. The words are strong and an invitation to gratitude: declare, praise, honour, revere, fulfil, seek, remember, turn to, bow before, feast, worship, kneel, serve, proclaim! Hagar suffered and cried out in her pain, just as we may, in times of distress. God's response is swift, merciful and compassionate and this account is a comfort to us as we embrace His promise that He will never leave us. What is our response towards those who are in despair or anguish? Do we, in faith, share our Lord Jesus and His Body, the New Church, with them, through our actions or words that testify to God's transforming, healing Grace in our own lives?

DAY 11:

Mon 1 Mar – *Ps 105:1-11, 37-45; Gen 21:1-7; Heb 1:8-12*

Despite Abram and Sarai's stumbling in faith, God's Covenantal love and faithfulness saw His great promise fulfilled in the birth of Isaac. Abraham and Sarah were restored and given new names as they continued their faith journey. Ps 105 speaks into our response to God's grace – a response of praise and delight in what God has done, a celebration of His faithfulness, of remembering and proclaiming Who He is in our lives. We read in Heb 1 of the One who would be anointed with the oil of joy (words from Psalm 45), echoing God's powerful affirmation of His Son at the Transfiguration, - a stirring reminder of the Deity and holiness of Jesus, who calls us to holiness in this Lenten journey.

DAY 12:

Tue 2 Mar – *Ps 105:1-11, 37-45; Gen 22:1-19; Heb 11:1-3, 13-19*

Today's readings speak strongly about faith – God's faithfulness, the faith of Abraham when he faced the ultimate test and the faith in action of God's people throughout the Scriptures. Today we consider our own faith and bring all that we are before God. It may be helpful to journal about what He has done in the past, what He is doing right now in your life and His promised healing and transformation in the future. Examine your own faith and faithfulness in the past and today. Honestly consider how much you need to ask God for strengthening of your trust, faith, hope and love and the way you relate to others, for the days ahead. Let us end this second week of Lent in reflection and a prayer of thanksgiving and adoration.