**Notes for Next Sunday**

Second Sunday in Lent

**The Point of this Week’s Readings**

Even while experiencing struggles, each of God’s people in these texts, wind up worshiping the Lord.

In the Psalm (22:23-31) David had suffered from his enemies’ attacks (22:1-20). Knowing that God has helped him in his great tussle, David now bursts forth with great praise.

In the Old Testament reading (Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16) (Abram and Sarai had been waiting for a long time (24 years) since God had promised them an heir.) God now again comes to them and confirms the covenant for a promised heir that He had made earlier with them. He also gives them new and very special names. Abraham responds by bowing down to God.

In the Epistle lesson (Romans 5:1-11) Paul tells the Roman Christians that they have been justified through Jesus Christ. This was not because of any merit on their part but “while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (v. 10). They now can have joy and peace even if they are suffering.

In the Gospel lesson (Mark 8:27-38) Jesus hears Peter’s confession but also reprimands Peter for his rebuke of Jesus concerning Jesus’ upcoming suffering and death. Jesus then speaks of the disciples having to take up their cross and follow Him in suffering and death. Then, they will share the glory of heaven which Jesus’ suffering and death has earned for them.

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

**Psalm 22:23-31**

**﻿23﻿ You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! ﻿24﻿ For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. ﻿25﻿ From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you﻿e﻿ will I fulfill my vows. ﻿26﻿ The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise him— may your hearts live forever! ﻿27﻿ All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, ﻿28﻿ for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. ﻿29﻿ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the just will kneel before him— those who cannot keep themselves alive. ﻿30﻿ Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. ﻿31﻿ They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn— for he has done it.**

In the above verses David heaps one mound of praise upon another. Go over them verse by verse and see how they play a part in your life.

**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. ﻿2﻿ I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.” ﻿3﻿ Abram 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. ﻿5﻿ No longer will you be called Abram﻿; your name will be Abraham,﻿ for I have made you a father of many nations. ﻿6﻿ I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ﻿7﻿ I 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.**

Abraham was now 99 years old. It had been 24 years since God had first appeared to Abram with the assurance that he would be the ancestor of the Savior. In human terms Abram, being 99 years old, must have really wondered if this pledge by God would ever happen.

In verse 1 the Lord introduces Himself to Abram with the title “God Almighty.” The Hebrew for that is *El-Shaddai* which means “God, the Mountain One.” This was a sign that Abram’s God could do anything. It was the special name by which God revealed himself to the patriarchs.

Also in verse 1 God tells Abram to “walk before me and be blameless*.*” By faith Abram had been declared righteous. God is telling Him to continue on that path. (Abram and Sarai had taken a detour when they attempted to obtain the promised offspring by using a surrogate mother.)

The Lord made it clear that, if Abram was to receive God’s promised and covenanted benefits, he must be God’s faithful and obedient servant. This obedience must come from his faith.

Abram falls on his face (v. 3). This is the ultimate sign of submission in faith.

God gives Abram a news name “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)

**﻿15﻿ God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. ﻿16﻿ I 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.”**

Sarai also gets a new name “Sarah.” Both names evidently mean “princess.” The renaming stressed that she was to be the mother of nations and kings and thus to serve the Lord’s purpose. (CSB)

**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 we﻿c﻿ 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.**

Paul reminds the Romans and us that we have been justified by faith. That means that there can now be peace with God. However sin remains within every human being and it is always at war **with** the spirit. Therefore there will be constant problems in the life of a Christian.

The peace spoken of is not merely a subjective feeling (peace of mind) but primarily an objective status, a new relationship with God: Once we were his enemies, but now we are his friends (v. 1).

“The list in verses 3-5 is not **a** catalog of virtues that his readers will achieve by their own will. These are effects of the Holy Spirit’s work in Christian lives. As God helps us through suffering, He teaches endurance, He develops character in us, and He gives us hope. Suffering is transformed by our relationship with God.” (TLSB)

“Rejoicing in our sufferings” (v. 3) does not deny or exclude pain as a reality.

 “Perseverance/endurance” (vv. 3-4) can be compared to the resiliency durableness that an athlete can produce by constant and vigorous training.

“Character” (v. 4) is a verb which is used with reference to testing the genuineness and the weight of coins to determine whether or not they met the established standards and requirement.

“Hope” (vv. 4-5) 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)

Verses 6-8 are explained very well by this commentary from TLSB: “Humans are reluctant to sacrifice for others. A few people might die for one who seemed particularly righteous or for one who had done them some good, but these are rare occurrences. Christ died, not for righteous people or for those who had helped Him, but for sinners. This is grace.”

Verses 9-11 re-affirm the idea that we can contribute nothing to our salvation. In fact it is when we are at our very worst that God redeemed us.

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**.

As Jesus and his disciples travel in northern Galilee, He takes a public opinion poll. What are the disciples hearing as they mingle with the crowds? Jesus obviously doesn’t need to find out what He already knows; He intends to help the disciples understand that people who experience miracles do not always understand and believe in the source of their aid.

Jesus then asks the crucial question: “What about you? Who do you say I am?” The Twelve saw all that the general public had seen. But had they perceived more? Would they let the revelations lead them to a different conclusion?

Peter answers for them all: “You are the Christ.” Unchurched people today may assume that Christ is Jesus’ last name, but it is a title which asserts that Jesus of Nazareth fulfills God’s OT promises. Greek Christ translates Hebrew *Messiah*, “Anointed One.” The technical term is so important that it is adopted into other languages.

**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 life﻿a﻿ 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.”**

Because Peter got the first answer right (remember the commendation that Jesus gives him in other gospels), Jesus goes on to the next lesson. He tells them in clear language what must happen because He is the Messiah. He gives a Reader’s Digest version of our OT Reading and Isaiah 53. Peter, perhaps with head swollen from knowing the right answer tithe first question, disagrees with the Teacher in the next lesson. He warns that talk of rejection and death does not sit well with the general public, nor with the Teacher’s students.

Then Jesus, who had given Peter an A+ for the first answer, kicks Peter out of the class. “Out of my sight, Satan!” is strong language. Jesus must reject the temptation to skip the part in the Messiah’s job description about suffering and dying. That assignment comes from God, not people; and only Satan would benefit from changing it.

Jesus now applies the implications of His own Messiahship to the lives of His followers (vv. 34-35). Just as He willingly submits to God’s will, even when that is painful, so they must also submit.

Many in the crowds had been following Christ for entirely material reason. Many were also defecting when it became clear that Jesus would not consent to become an earthly “bread” king.

Physical life may be saved by denying Jesus, but eternal life will be lost. Conversely, discipleship may result in the loss of physical life, but that loss is insignificant when compared with gaining eternal life. (CSB)

There will be many such persons who are ashamed, since the cross is a scandal.

The word “adulterous” (v. 38) goes back to the OT picture of God’s people, Israel, as his wife who is unfaithful to him. The NT picture of the church is as Christ’s spotless bride (Eph 5:21-33).

The situation in which Jesus is rejected, humiliated and put to death will be reversed when he returns in glory as the Judge of all men (v. 38). (CSB)