

2 Lent

February 21, 2016

Rev Ken Wratten at St. Stephen's

Trust in the Lord...

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Abram's trust in God is reckoned to him as righteousness.

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Many set their minds on earthly things. Stand firm.

Luke 13:22-35

Jesus rejected a warning to leave Jerusalem, trusting God.

A major theme of Lent is self-examination; and these lessons take us deeply into that place of self-examination of trust.

Jesus had spent almost three years teaching how we can live more fully on earth, and what life in heaven is like. He is now on his way to Jerusalem for the last time; and he knows it is the last time, as Moses and Elijah had told him on the Mount of the Transfiguration. He flatly rejects the warning of the religious leaders to get out of Jerusalem in order to be a safe distance from Herod. He fully trusted in God's purpose for his ministry, and NOTHING was going to distract him from accomplishing it.

Paul was explaining to the people in Philippi that some Christians (not the Philippians) were messing with the message from Christ. They believed that because Jesus paid for all sins, that sinning didn't matter. So these so-called Christians lived their lives with no regard for living into the image of Christ. Instead of focusing on heavenly things, "their god is their belly".

Paul pleaded with his dear friends in Philippi to 'stand firm' in their trust in the Lord. By standing firm they would be able to claim their citizenship in heaven. They would experience the transformation of their mortal and weak earthly bodies (humiliation) into bodies that would "conform to the glory of Christ". That transformation, eternal life, come out of trust in the Lord.

In our Genesis reading, Abram believes with his whole being that God will fulfill the promise to be given an heir, and in fact, as many as there are stars in the sky! Abram doesn't need a strategic plan, or a Gantt chart to show the timeline that these things will happen. He simply believes, and lives his life according to that belief and trust. And God made it so.

Abram, Paul, and Jesus all held trust in God's divine plan for the future, even despite the actions of King Herod, or Judas; despite the effects of the sins of others.

God rewards our trust in Him. The reward promised to Abram is a gift of grace available by trusting in God; it is not an arrangement where payment is given for a service rendered. It is a one-way contract, that only requires trust.

**We are invited into this place of trust that allows God’s grace to flow and grow in our lives.**

So let’s consider some places of calling for TRUST in our lives:

Financial: We make a budget.

We change jobs to get more income.

We make decisions whether both parents will work outside the home.

We can choose for God to direct each decision, with trust that by inviting God into the process, God’s grace will flow.

Professional: We learn to compete harder for promotions.

We push to ask for more responsibilities.

We look for good mentors.

And if we invite God into the process, and look for God’s grace to flow, we can trust God to be faithful with blessing.

Marriage: We work for a healthier partnership.

We work for a balance of interdependence and independence

We spend some nights until 2 AM talking out things we disagree on.

We learn how to compromise, to find a win/win solution – no loser in the way we resolve the disagreement.

We can invite God into the conversation, and ask for God’s grace to flow.

This applies to all caring relationships –relatives, close friends.

Spiritual: We want a deeper sense of connection to God.

We study, pray, keep God “in play” during the day.

We learn to trust in the flow of God’s grace, and we adjust our decision making, our habits, and our practices of faith to get into the deeper waters of the flow of His grace.

If there is no trust in the Lord to direct our lives, it is likely we will not see God’s grace in any of these things. We get stuck in the way things are.

At the same time that our faith in Jesus Christ assures us of an eternal life with him in heaven, we are also challenged to live our lives **HERE AND NOW** in the trust that we can find our unique purpose, a lived-into faith.

I ask you that we commit to God and to each other, to operate together as a faith community; to provide teaching, strength, support and protection to help find our faith again if we lose it, and to stay steadfast in our trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. I ask that we commit to glorify God when the flow of His grace brings us chills of awareness that He is right here with us, and gratitude that He never gives up on us. Amen.