

Promise of New Beginnings

Promise of Lent: Part 1 “Promise of New Beginnings”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – February 21, 2021

1st Sunday in Lent

Readings: Genesis 9:8-17; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

Reflection: Psalm 25:1-10

Greeting: Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. (*Isaiah 2:5,3c*)

Prayer: Everlasting God, because of your tender mercy toward all people, you sent your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon himself our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all should follow the example of his great humility. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of his patience through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 25

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord! Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.
(Psalm 25:1-10 NRSV*)

We read the words of Psalm 25 and hear of trusting in God. That we should seek God to be saved. That God will guide us and lead us. That God's love is never far from us. That we follow God and hold to God's promise for us. In what ways do you exalt God in your life? How do you praise God for his goodness? How do you share the salvation that is offered to you to all people? How do you humble yourself before God? How do you reflect God's steadfast love?

Prayer: Almighty God, your blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan. Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations. And, as you know the weakness of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Genesis chapter 9, verses 8 through 17.

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

(Genesis 9:8-17 NRSV)*

Our next reading is from 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 18 through 22.

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

(1 Peter 3:18-22 NRSV)*

Our last reading is from Mark chapter 1, verses 9 through 15.

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

(Mark 1:9-15 NRSV)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We begin a new series for Lent. In this one, we're going to be talking about promises. We see the idea of a covenant, a promise, both failing and being renewed as part of our readings during Lent. Lent is also a time for us to renew our covenant with God within us, a time that we take to focus in on our own actions. A time to reflect on our lives as we reflect on the sacrifice made so that we may live. This week, we begin with a few familiar readings and they do all link together. In our Gospel reading we have Jesus being baptized by John in the Jordan, and then he goes and spends his 40 days in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry. And Jesus comes out of the wilderness ready to begin his ministry to spread the good news. The kingdom of God has come near. And our Old Testament reading for today we have the great flood with Noah. And we have the aftermath of that flood. I think it's interesting because in the aftermath we get a promise that never again will everything be wiped out. And I think the symbolism of the flood is great here because it's use is twofold. Our reading from First Peter reflects on baptism and its connection to the flood. That the flood was to wash the world clean and baptism is that we may be washed clean, not removing dirt but as an appeal to God to receive a good conscience through Jesus Christ.

For me, the interesting thing was the idea that this promise after the flood is one that basically says trying to remove sin from the world by removing the people will only work if all the people are removed. If we read the account of Noah, it doesn't take long before trouble stirs up again after the flood. Maybe not to the degree that it was right away, but it doesn't take long before there are big problems. I see the flood as a symbolic story. The flood helps to show us that getting rid of some people to get rid of sin doesn't work. That our brokenness isn't just a problem of wiping out all the bad people, so to speak. Because you can only do that if you remove all the people. That because we are humans and we are flawed, that we will sin. And that the covenant made is never again will everyone be wiped out. We're going to find a different way to do this. This is a new beginning, and we start with this promise that never again will this happen. We see the idea of a new beginning also in our Gospel reading, that the baptism that Christ receives begins his public ministry and marks a new beginning with a new covenant.

As I was reflecting on this, thinking about this promise of never again, and of a new beginning, I thought about the way that repentance works for us. That we aren't called to become perfect people. That we aren't called to simply never sin again on our own. Is that the goal? Yes. Is that achievable on our own? No. And I think it's important that we recognize that, because often we throw everything on ourselves. That we're supposed to fix everything, that we're supposed to do everything, and we know it doesn't work that way. We need other people. We need Christ. But the idea that we get from today's readings is that those flaws can't just be wiped out. But that God has a plan. And that was for us to be given a new way to become clean. That if the earth could not be washed clean from sin without removing the people, then the people must be washed clean. And this promise is a two-way street. That we are offering a

new beginning, but we have to accept it. The promise that I think of during Lent is the promise that we can be saved. That we can appeal to God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ to be made whole. To be made complete. That Christ came to give us a new beginning, to always offer us a new beginning. That he would take on our sins as he took on our flesh and he would die for our sake, that we would understand and know the love of God. And we will be discussing all this as we get further in to Lent.

I wanted to reflect on this because Lent is a time for us to reflect on our own actions in our own lives. And to be able to look at what we're doing and think about what it is we want to change and how it is we want to change. And what we can do to make that happen. And it starts with an appeal to God for a new beginning in our own lives. Not that we need to have our whole life completely wiped off the map, that we need a flood drain everything away, but we ask that we be reminded of God's presence in our lives. That we'd be reminded of the Holy Spirit's influence. That we be reminded of Christ's sacrifice that we may live. That we don't have to take on 40 days in the wilderness to face temptation because Christ did it for us. That we don't have to die for our sins because Christ did it for us. But that we appeal to Christ to guide us and lead us, so that we may discover the life that God has ready for us.

Over the next few weeks, we will be talking about patience, salvation, justice, and how God promises are forever. And we'll be linking these things together as we journey to the cross. So, as we think of the promise of Lent, we know where it ends and that it ends in a new beginning. Because we know how the story will unfold. And we will see Christ die on the cross. And normally, that would be the end of any story as much as normally flooding the world to get rid of all the people would be the end of the story. But it's not. Because following death on the cross comes the resurrection. Following despair comes hope, and it is the hope that we cling to. And it is in that hope that we have every new beginning. So, it is in that hope that we look inward. I hope that all of us over these next few weeks will be able to look inward and reflect on what it is that we are wanting to keep doing and what it is we need to stop. That we let this time be a time of reflection, a time where we focus in and ask God for the help that we need for a new beginning.

Now, because I don't know about you but I'm always in need of a new beginning, always in need of Christ to wash me clean, to lift me up, to give me hope. Because I know I will not always make the best decisions. But I know there's a promise that I can always try again. That every end is a new beginning. That even when it seems like it has to be the grand finale, God's always there with something more. Christ is always there to offer us his hand in love. And so, when I think about the promise of a new beginning, I don't just think about a promise never to be destroyed. I see that promise as one that says God doesn't want to wipe us out, so God is going to find a way to make you whole. God doesn't want to put an end to you so God is going to find a way that you can always have a new beginning. And we see that on Christ's journey to the cross. So, in these 40 days, I pray that we may all reflect on the life that we are living. Pray on the things that we'd like to keep doing and the things we'd like to change. And that we may

more completely welcome Christ into our lives. As we remember this journey, one full of ups and downs, full of triumph and tragedy, but one that always has hope. Let us take that hope and remember our own new beginnings as we remember the promises of Lent. As we remember the love of God the Father, sacrifices made by Christ the Son, that we may always be guided by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God of grace and glory, we thank you that you judge us not by the perfection of our actions, but by our readiness to live boldly by faith. Help us, as individuals and as a congregation, to trust you and follow where you lead, that in Christ your name may be glorified in all the earth. In these forty days, may God's grace be shown to us all, cleansing us from our sins, and restoring us in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Promise of Lent

Our series is *Promise of Lent* and looks at the ways that we view God's promises during the season of Lent. Each week we look at the promises in a different light.

February 21st – *Promise of New Beginnings* - Genesis 9:8-17; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

February 28th – *Promise Everlasting* – Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

March 7th – *Promise of Justice* – Exodus 20:1-17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

March 14th – *Promise of Salvation* – Numbers 21:4-9; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

March 21st – *Promise and Patience* – Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Eric Veach	Cathy Devall
Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew
Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen
Don Stewart	Anne Winkler Heinrichs		Michael & Makenzie Reynolds
Ronnie Winstead	John Millsap	Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons
Trinity Powers	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family
Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Family of Lois Woolever	Mary White
Nick Nichols	Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite	Greg Williams
Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte
Kim Hennes	Residents of the Greenup Nursing Center		

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