

FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD 2.21.2021

Let's look at the Bible readings for the 1st Sunday in Lent, Feb. 21, to prepare for on-line, drive-in, and in-person worship (10 am) with Abounding Joy.

1ST READING: Genesis 22:1-18

¹After these things God **tested** Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ²He said, "Take **your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love**, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

³So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. ⁵Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."

⁶And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. ⁷And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but **where is the lamb** for a burnt offering?" ⁸Abraham said, "**God will provide for himself the lamb** for a burnt offering, my son."

So they went both of them together. ⁹When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid

the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

¹¹But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹²He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld **your son, your only son**, from me." ¹³And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, **behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket** by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

¹⁴So Abraham called the name of that place, "**The Lord will provide**"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord **it shall be provided**." ¹⁵And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld **your son, your only son**, ¹⁷I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸and **in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed**, because you have obeyed my voice."

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO GENESIS, CHAPTER 22

1. In this story God tests Abraham. In the Gospel reading Satan tempts Jesus. What's the difference between testing and tempting? Does God tempt, or just test? Does Satan test, or just tempt?
2. Do you think God really would have allowed Abraham to kill his son, Isaac?
3. If God was going to be able to work through Abraham as the father of many generations, what did He need to know about Abraham? What did Abraham need to know about himself?

4. Was there a danger of Abraham placing his hope in Isaac, rather than in the Lord?
5. What connection do you make between the many reference here to “your son, your only son” and the Christian message? See John 3:16-17.
6. Written in the context of an age when child sacrifice was quite common in other nations and religions in that part of the world, what statement does this text make?

2ND READING: James 1:12-18

¹²Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under **trial**, for when he has stood the **test** he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³Let no one say when he is **tempted**, “I am being **tempted** by God,” for God cannot be **tempted** with evil, and he himself **tempts** no one. ¹⁴But each person is **tempted** when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to

sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. ¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO JAMES, CHAPTER 1:

1. It has been said that God **tests** us so that we learn to trust Him, and that Satan **tempts** us in order to tear down and destroy our trust in God. Does that seem right to you?
2. Martin Luther said you can’t stop birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair. How does that relate to the matter of temptation?
3. How do verses 14-15 relate to the story of David and Bathsheba?
4. Vs. 17 tells us that good things come from God. From where do the bad things come?

THE GOSPEL: Mark 1:9-15

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

¹²The Spirit immediately drove him out into

the wilderness. ¹³And he was in the wilderness **FORTY DAYS**, being **tempted** by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO MARK, CHAPTER 1:

1. Compare this short account of the temptation of Jesus with the longer ones in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. What did you learn from this comparison?
2. Find references to all three persons of the Trinity in vss. 9-12.
3. What’s the significance of the number 40 in this story? Check out Genesis 7:4, Exodus 24:18, and Numbers 32:13.
4. How does the sequence here of baptism leading to temptation relate to our Christian walk?
5. How does the outcome of Jesus’ time in the wilderness compare with that of the Israelites?