

For: Sunday, February 25, 2018 – Lent 2

THEME OF THE DAY

Remembering the spiritual roots of grace. All the texts, in different ways, proclaim our justification by grace, which is constantly and consistently with us in surprising ways, even when enduring hard times.

PRIMARY TEXT

READ Mark 8:31-38

Commentary: Again we consider a text in the first of the Synoptic Gospels to be written, a book that was perhaps the source of other gospels, likely based on oral traditions of the Passion narrative and accounts of Jesus' sayings (the so-called Q-source). Probably written prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, this anonymous work is traditionally ascribed to John Mark, perhaps referred to as an associate of Paul (Acts 12:12-25, 15:37; Colossians 4:10) or as Peter's scribe (1 Peter 5:13). Some speculate that the original audience was the church in Rome (especially Gentiles), as it presumes readers unfamiliar with Jewish customs and Palestinian geography (see 7:2-4, 31), but it also could have been written for Palestinian Christians.

The text recounts events following Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah [*christos*, which was the Greek term for Old Testament references to "Anointed One"] (v. 29). The same stories appear in the other Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 16:21-26; Luke 9:22-26). Jesus teaches that the Son of Man [*huios tou anthropou*] must suffer and be rejected by the elders [Sanhedrin], chief priest, and scribes (v. 31). The title functions at this point to refer to Jesus' Passion. As used by Mark's version of Jesus, it is a way of affirming that Jesus is just a typical human being. But the title could also connote the prophesied figure of Daniel 7:13-14 whom many Jews of the era regarded as the coming Messiah.

Peter rebukes Jesus for this teaching (v. 32, an account not appearing in Luke's version) and was in turn sternly rebuked for setting his mind on human beings (v. 33). Calling Peter "Satan" is to refer to him as an adversary of God.

Jesus then continues with a discourse on discipleship, calling followers to deny [*aparneomai*] themselves, take up their cross [*stauros*], and follow him (v.34). We save [*sozo*, or keep sound] our lives, it seems, by losing [*apollumi*]

them (v. 35). Those ashamed of Jesus and his words in this adulterous [*moichalis*], sinful generation will find the Son of Man (understood here as referring to Jesus' role in judgment) ashamed [*epaischunomai*] of them when he comes in the glory [*doxa*] of the Father (v. 38). This warning does not appear in Matthew's version.

Application: The text provides opportunities to consider how we might wish to have God do things our way. Additionally, it urges us to understand just what bearing the cross involves. We are assured that worldly loss may mean spiritual gain. *Lectionaryscripturenotes.com*

ADDITIONAL TEXTS

Psalm 22:23-31

²³ You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! ²⁴ For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him. ²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him. ²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord. May your hearts live forever! ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. ²⁸ For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations. ²⁹ To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. ³⁰ Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, ³¹ and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' ³Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

¹⁵ God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.'

Romans 4:13-25

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶ For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations')—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations', according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.' ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²Therefore his faith 'was reckoned to him as righteousness.' ²³Now the words, 'it was reckoned to him', were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What theme(s) hold these texts together?
2. What role(s) do we expect our messiah to fulfill?
3. Have you ever found yourself in argument with God? Was it over expectations that God did not fulfill? Something else?
4. What can be expected for those who maintain faith in God's promises? For those who pick up their cross to follow Christ?

SUMMING IT UP:

- **What** is important to know and remember?
- **Where** is God found or seen in these words?
- **So what** does this mean for our lives?
- **Now what** is God's word calling us to do?