



Second Week of Lent

March 8 through March 14, 2009

Journeying Through Lent A Time to Listen

Use this resource alone or with others. Used with others, read the reflections aloud, pausing between them. Invite each member of the group to take a turn reading, or prepare readers in advance for larger groups. Share with each other your Lenten commitments and promises, keeping within the silence of your own heart those things which belong only there.

Opening Ritual & Prayer

Light a candle. Open your Bible and set it beside the lit candle. Prepare the room for prayer, even if you are alone. Quiet music can help to settle yourself and others after a hectic day.

Leader: O God, come to my assistance

All: O Lord make haste to help me.

Leader: God help us to listen to you and to your son Jesus.

All: May we keep our eyes, ears, minds and hearts open to hear your voice

Leader: God transfigure us as you did your son Jesus

All: Amen

Read aloud to yourself or have various members of the group read aloud the Scripture readings for the Second Sunday of Lent (Year B):

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Romans 8:31b-34

Mark 9:2-10.

Reflection

In Lent we learn how to listen to God and Jesus.

The Scriptures for the Second Sunday of Lent have us journey to high places with Abraham and Isaac, and with Jesus and three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John. High places in the Bible are where God is encountered and people are tested. They are places where you go to get away from the mundane and the ordinary so as to encounter the extraordinary and the divine.

In the first reading we turn to the ancient story of the binding of Isaac. Abraham is put to the test by God. It is time to hand over to God in trust Abraham's most precious possession: his child. This child is his hope for the future, the tangible sign God made with him in the covenant. Now it is time to offer the child as a holocaust, a burnt offering, so that there is nothing left in Abraham's heart and it can be given over fully to God.

God points out the chosen place. Abraham dutifully builds the altar. He obeys or better he begins to obey. The messenger of the Lord (an angel) stays his hand and relays a message from God: “I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son.” God knows Abraham in this binding of Isaac, and Abraham knows that he is known by God. God has entered into Abraham, probed him, and discovers his fidelity and obedience. It is not Isaac who is bound here, but rather Abraham who is bound more closely to God.

This is a story of hope for all of us. God does not want human sacrifice. God wants us, our hearts, and lives and souls just the way he wanted Abraham. In both Judaism and Christianity Abraham is a paradigm of faith who “when tested was found loyal (Sirach 44:20), who “hoped against hope” (Romans 4:18), and who “by faith...when put to the test, offered up Isaac because he believed in a God who could raise up the dead” (Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham is a model for all of us who wrestle with the demands God makes of us. Also in Jewish tradition Isaac is transformed into a model of self sacrifice who went willingly to his death, which is adopted by Christians for Jesus, “the Son of God’ who “has loved me and given himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Ask Yourself

**How and where do you find hope when things seem most hopeless?
When life throws you a curve, how do you turn your heart to God?**

The second Sunday of Lent always presents one of the accounts of the transfiguration of Jesus before Peter, James, and John. They go up a high mountain and get a glimpse of the resurrection. The story is dense with imagery borrowed from the book of Daniel (see Daniel chapter 7). In Daniel the Son of Man comes in glory; with white robes, angels, and light to judge the nations. He is a very human person that reveals the Spirit. For the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is the Son of Man appearing with Moses and Elijah, the liberator and lawgiver of Israel and the prophet of expectation and future hope of the Messiah are with Jesus in conversation. This is an encapsulated history of an entire people standing with Jesus.

Peter, impetuous as usual, and seemingly oblivious to the power of the moment wants to capture it by erecting shrines for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Peter likes the “special effects” on the mountain top and does not want to lose it for once he descends from the mountain he like all the disciples will set their face toward Jerusalem and the embracing of the cross. Like Peter we all think it is good to be here on the mountain top away from the hustle and bustle, pain and violence of the world below.

Suddenly a booming voice is heard from the cloud saying: “This is my Son, my beloved. Listen to him.” *Listen!* This is how we are to make it through Lent to the fullness of God’s vision. The way to Easter is by *listening* to the beloved Son, the child of God, the suffering servant, the prophet, the judge of the nations the word of God: Jesus.

In our lives whose voice are we *listening* to each day? How do we *listen* to Jesus? What encourages us to *listen*? What areas of the Gospel do we not heed? Who in our life can help us *listen* to Jesus more clearly?

Ask Yourself

To whom can I talk about what it means to *listen* to Jesus?

We are called today in this season of Lent to *listen*, to obey and submit to Jesus. In doing so, others will see through us the glory of God just as the disciples saw it through Jesus. God didn’t spare Jesus from the ravages and risks of being human, and God doesn’t spare us either. We must learn in this season of Lent to see the glory of God and the presence of Jesus transfigured in those who suffer unjustly and those who live risking everything to save others from despair, death and sin.

The transfiguration story is a way of life that we are called to imitate. We are meant to transfigure ourselves, our relationships, our earth and the church so that others can see God through us. The Sacred Scriptures provide us with the skills needed to transfigure all of creation. In the first reading Abraham stands as a model of what it means to *listen* to God: ‘Here I am’ he answered whenever God called. If Abraham had not continued *listening* he would not have heard God say do not harm your son Isaac. In the Gospel reading, God’s voice commands us to *listen* to his “beloved son.” Like Abraham, we do not know in advance what this *listening* might entail of us or how our perception of God’s beloved son might change. Only attentive *listening* to God of surprises leads us to a transfigured life.

Reflection Questions

- ✚ Am I an attentive listener to God and Jesus?
- ✚ When I listen to the Gospels am I a selective listener only listening to the part of the story I like and will accept rather than the whole Gospel?
- ✚ Who are the people who help me listen to God and Jesus?
- ✚ Who or what gets in the way of my listening to God's beloved son?

Activities for this Week of Lent

For Individuals, Families and Parishes

This week as your Lenten practice, attempt to be an attentive listener at work, at home and at any meeting you might participate in. At the family dinner table provide time for each person to feel truly listened to by everyone gathered for the meal. Ask each other if you have felt listened to by sharing positive feedback. Time permitting, complete the following:

I have listened to God when I....
God has listened to me when I....

For Children

This week complete the following phrases:

At school I listen to my teacher (s) when....
At school I feel listened to by....
At home I listen to....
At home I feel listened to by....
I listen to God when I....

Closing Prayer

Leader: For our time together today

All: God's holy name be blessed and praised

Leader: For all the blessings we have received from God

All: God's holy name be blessed and praised

Leader: For this season of Lent, may it be a time of spiritual growth for all of us

All: Amen

Exchange a greeting of peace with all who are present.