

# Scripture Readings and Sermon

*June 14, 2020 by Rev. Mark Brechin*

## **Commentary on Genesis 18:1-14** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

The story of Abram begins in Chapter 12 of Genesis with Abram call. "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." In Chapter 13:16, the LORD again promises to give Abram a multitude of descendants but by Chapter 16 Sarai has given up hope of being a mother and Hagar bore Abram a son, Ishmael. The LORD then changes their names to Abraham and Sarah and again promises them children. By chapter 18, however, Sarah has lost all hope but Abraham remains watching for the LORD. Because he is vigilant, he recognizes the "three men" of God and asks for a blessing by showing full hospitality. These men then tell Abraham that Sarah will soon be with child but Sarah's hopelessness laughs at the suggestion. In response, Sarah's faith is challenged by stating "Is anything too wonderful for the LORD?" This same question will be asked of Mary. The passage calls for faith which hopes for what is not yet seen.

## **Commentary on Matthew 9:35-10:1,5-16** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

After Jesus calls the disciples in Chapter 4, Matthew records Jesus' sermon on the Mount (Chapters 4-7). Following his teaching, Jesus receives a continuous string of requests for healing (leper, centurion's servant, Peter's mother-in-law, Geresene demoniac, paralytic, ruler's daughter, bleeding woman, blind men, and a mute). At this point, the reader may begin to mistake Jesus' ministry as one of healing rather than proclamation of salvation. Matthew reminds the reader that the healings are a by product of Jesus' compassion for the lost sheep of Israel. The Greek word for "compassion" literally means "gut wrenching". This healing, however, is work for the laborers of the harvest and not the Lord of the Harvest so Jesus sends out the disciples to continue healing while he departs to teach and preach. Just as a candle dispels the darkness, the good news of the kingdom of heaven dispels the demonic forces of darkness. More than any other Gospel, the presence of Jesus in Matthew reveals the reality of evil in the world.

## **Commentary on Romans 5:1-8** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

In Chapter 4, Paul makes an extensive argument that Abraham is not made righteous because of his obedience to the Law since there was no Law yet but was made righteous by his faith in God. It was not the law that made Abraham obedient to God's call but his faith. That same leap of faith in the resurrection of Jesus that by grace justifies the believer. Faith is not a work but is a response to the work that has already been done. Humanity could not reconcile their relationship with God but "while were still weak" God sent the "anointed one" (Christ) as a means of reconciliation. This was not done through an animal sacrifice but rather for the free will act of love on the cross. By accepting this act of love by faith, we are justified. Justification by faith brings righteousness with God and peace through Jesus Christ. From this relationship flows grace which imparts hope to the faithful even during tribulation. When faced with tribulation, the faithful can either lose their faith or persevere in their trust. If they persevere, they will find that God has given them sufficient grace to stand strong which strengthens their righteous character. Like a callous that grows harder and stronger with every use, the person whose character finds their hope in God only grows in hope with each tribulation for God does not disappoint. The more a believer relies on faith, the more the Holy Spirit supports and encourages the believer.

## **Sermon "Impossible Compassion " (*Sermon Video*)**

If God is the creator of all things, than what is impossible for God? This point is repeated over and over throughout the scriptures. From Mary and Elizabeth to Sarah, the messengers of God remind us that nothing is impossible for God. If God created the female body for reproduction, than God can make a virgin or a post-menopausal woman pregnant. The only question is when God sends a miracle, are we ready to receive it? While Sarah laughed, Abraham rolled out the red carpet for he perceived that his three visitors were from God.

God is always offering us a third option. When everything seems black and white and there are no good solutions, that is when we need to pray. God's grace is always providing another way or the means to endure the way ahead. The question is whether we will fail to see what is being offered like Sarah or whether we will embrace God like Abraham. Oh God, do not pass your servant by even when our vision is to limited to see all the possibilities you offer.

God's grace comes to us even in the midst of our ignorance and sin. For while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We are justified not by anything we can or could do but rather by what Jesus has and is doing. It is by faith that we open our heart to Christ and it is by God's grace that we are saved. What is impossible for us is always possible for God even saving a sinner like me. If I but lean upon that grace, I will find that even in the midst of suffering God's grace is sufficient. By finding that God's grace never fails, I can begin to act not out of self preservation but out of selfless love. The character and nature that God originally created begins to emerge and with it an unfailing hope in its creator. A hope that at one time seemed impossible become possible through grace because of Jesus Christ.

Christ came to proclaim this good news of impossibility. Repent from our broken ways and believe in the goodness of God's impossible love and we will begin to perceive the kingdom of God now. This was the good news but when Jesus began to proclaim this message, he found that people were to broken and hopeless to even hear. He was moved with a compassion that twisted his guts and made him put aside his message so that he could heal the lost sheep. The harvest is great but the workers are few he lamented when faced with the suffering of the people. Go forth, he told his followers, and bring healing to the broken so that they may find God's impossible hope in the midst of their pain. This healing is not brought by words alone but by the simple act of loving compassion. This impossible compassion that sits with the grieving and puts a hand out to the fallen. This impossible compassion that sees fully the suffering of the world and knows that God's love is sufficient. This impossible compassion that rejects the hatred and negativity of society and boldly believes that one man on a cross has the power to change the world.

**Genesis 18:1-14, Romans 5:1-8, Matthew 9:35-10:1,5-16**

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