



February 28, 2021
Greenfield Charge United Church of Christ

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Sunday Meditation

"Lent is like a long 'retreat' during which we can turn back into ourselves and listen to the voice of God, in order to defeat the temptations of the Evil One. It is a period of spiritual 'combat' which we must experience alongside Jesus, not with pride and presumption, but using the arms of faith: prayer, listening to the word of God and penance. In this way we will be able to celebrate Easter in truth, ready to renew the promises of our Baptism."

-- Pope Benedict XVI

Community News

Prayer List and Prayers of the People

Prelude/Lighting of the Candles

* *Call to Worship*

(*Genesis 17: 1-2, paraphrased*)

“Walk before me, and be blameless,” said God to Abram,
“And I shall make my covenant between me and you.”

Quite openly, we have measured that distance.

Quite openly, we have stayed away.

Quite openly, we have distanced ourselves.

Quite openly, we did not want to be closer.

Quite openly, we are not blameless.

Quite openly, we are here.

**We are here to open ourselves
to our In-between God.**

* *Opening Hymn*

“Faith of Our Fathers”

Mt Hope VH #246

Greenfield CH #404

Grace VH #246

Gathering Prayer

Spirit of the ages, name us and claim us according to your purposes, as you once called Abram and Sarai long ago. Train our ears to hear your call and tune our hearts to open at the sound of your voice. As we pick up our cross to follow you, raise us to newness of life. For you call us to be children of your covenant, heirs with your Son, and disciples of your grace. Amen.

First Reading

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 NIV

The Covenant of Circumcision

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and

be blameless. ² Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

³ Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ⁴ “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷ I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

¹⁵ God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶ I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

Prayer of Confession

We are quite open about our successes.
We feel free to boast when we have done well,
but we are not quite so open when things have gone wrong.
We do not praise God anyway.
Instead, we recognize the distance
between me and you
between you and God
between God and me.
Let's be quite open about it
as we open ourselves
to our Living God in silence

Extended prayerful silence.

Words of Assurance

You can look behind. You can search ahead. God will meet you in between. God promises to always be right there. If you believe this to be so, if you believe God is between here and there, between me and you, share that peace with your neighbor.

¹³ It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴ For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵ because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷ As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²² This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." ²³ The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, ²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

* *The Reading of the Holy Gospel*

Mark 8:31-38 NIV

Gloria Tibi (Glory be to Thee, O Lord.)

TH #497

Jesus Predicts His Death

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three

days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

The Way of the Cross

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

* *Gloria Patri*

Children's Message

* *Meditation Hymn*

Mt Hope VH #320

“Give Me Jesus”

Greenfield CH #554

Grace VH #320

Today's Message

* *The Apostle's Creed*

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hades; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

