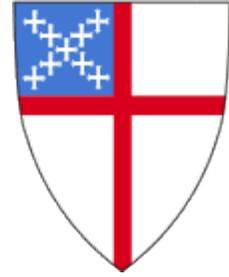


The Lessons Appointed for Use on the
Second Sunday in Lent

Year A
RCL



- [Genesis 12:1-4a](#)
- [Romans 4:1-5, 13-17](#)
- [John 3:1-17](#)
- [Psalm 121](#)

Remember the trust falls? Every one lines up and a volunteer prepares by standing on a chair, and then falls, trusting that the assembled catchers will be able to do just that. What could go wrong. Well, I saw a YouTube video of a brave soul climbing on a chair, folding his arms, and on the count of three fell in the opposite directed of those prepared to safely catch him.

In our scriptures, everyone seems to be falling in the right direction. Abram is called to pack up and leave his home and go to a place that God will designate during the journey. There will be a great reward, but Abram must climb up on that chair, fold his arms and fall toward God.

Nikodemus doesn't quite understand the whole thing. He is filled with questions about Christ's message. He has to admit, Jesus speaks and acts with authority.

Yet, he came to find Jesus, to question him, under the cover of night. He is teetering on the edge of a precipice that may represent belief, or doubt and

disbelief. We know the Nikodemus became close to Jesus, fully accepting him and his message. It was, after all, Nikodemus that defended Jesus against the Sanhedrin, and provided the spices for Jesus body.

His questions might be asked by anyone of us today. How can one be born a second time? How can anyone reenter the mother's womb? And Jesus assures him of the direction he must fall – toward trusting Christ, toward the idea that we must leave all our pre-conceptions behind. We must fully accept that God will catch us, and carry us to heaven, where we cannot go unless and until we can accept fully the role Jesus is playing in our lives.

Its all about baptism. When Jesus went to the River Jordan to be baptized, it was considered a cleansing ritual. A way to become clean and ready to return to worship at the temple. But the baptism we have had a Christians, is a baptism of water and the Holy Spirit. It is the baptism Jesus spoke to Nikodemus about – not just a baptism of water, but of water AND the Holy Spirit.

Do you remember what a sacrament is? An outward and spiritual sign of an inward and spiritual grace. What are the outward signs of baptism? Water and chrism, special oil that has been blessed by the bishop.

During the sacraments of reception, baptism and confirmation, we promise to follow Christ's teaching, we accept the Apostle's Creed, and we renounce evil. We accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. And we promise obedience to him. Those are pretty big promises.

Our world is full of temptations. Full of evil that is alluring. Last week we talked about the serpent in the Garden convincing Eve and Adam that it was okay to disobey God. When we do those things that hurt our neighbor, or our families, or friends, we are disobeying God and turning against those vows.

And each time we pray, we should ask forgiveness, and for guidance and strength to turn away from the evil we do.

Sometimes, we hear an inner voice trying to convince us that we deserve to take something that isn't ours, to do something we know we shouldn't do. We need to know that that serpent's voice is always near. Diligently trying to take us away from God. And even when that happens, God is still trying to bring us back.

We have to turn toward God. We have to be open to his voice. We need to hear his words.

Yesterday, several of us from the Vestry attended a diocesan Leadership Conference. The bishop made a presentation on baptism, then we participated in

short discussions. One entitled Gospel Based Discipleship, which I attended, was a discussion on one was to do Bible study. This unique way of starting to look at scripture helps us to understand that scripture is very much alive. It has meaning for our lives today.

We will begin with a short prayer, then I will ask for three volunteers to read the Gospel.

God of peace, let us your people know, that at the heart of turbulence there is an inner calm that comes from faith in you. Keep us from being content with things as they are, that from this central peace there may come a creative compassion, a thirst for justice, and a willingness to give of ourselves in the Spirit of Christ. Amen

John 3:1-17

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

What word, idea, or sentence stands out to you?

Let’s read this passage again. This time, the question you will be asked to answer is, “What is Jesus saying to you?”

Now let’s re-read the Gospel again, “what is Jesus calling you to do? “

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever held fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen