

Sunday, March 17, 2019

Second Sunday of Lent

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

2nd Reading: Philippians 3:17-4:1

Responsorial: Psalm 27:1, 7-9, 13-14

Gospel: Luke 9:28-36

Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus and His Promises

Look up. (Genesis 15:5)

All three readings today urge us to do one thing: fix our eyes on heaven. In the first reading, God told Abraham to look at the night sky. “Count the stars, if you can. Just so . . . shall your descendants be,” he promised (Genesis 15:5). Abraham, who was already advanced in years and childless, would somehow become the father of many nations.

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that “our citizenship is in heaven” and not in this world (Philippians 3:20). He tells us that we belong there, and that we should keep that truth in mind so that we can “stand firm in the Lord” (4:1).

And in the Gospel, Jesus gives Peter, James, and John a vision of his heavenly glory. He knew he was headed for the cross and that his death would shake them to the core. So he gave them this vision to strengthen their faith and encourage them, even as they saw him arrested, tortured, and killed.

Jesus wants us to fix our eyes on heaven as well. He wants us to focus on his glory and his promises as we pray each morning. He knows that if we do, we’ll give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to write these promises on our hearts. We’ll let the Spirit show us Jesus’ love and mercy so that we can stay close to him during the day.

Here are some key promises you can fix your eyes on. First, God promises to keep his covenant with you, just as he kept his covenant with Abraham. Second, Jesus promises that your citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). You belong to him! And third, the Holy Spirit promises that if you fix your eyes on Jesus in prayer every day, you’ll begin to see him more clearly, just as the apostles caught a glimpse of him at his transfiguration.

Choose one of these promises today, and dwell on it. Repeat it over and over. Fix your heart on the way it reveals God’s love for you. Look up to heaven, and let your heart be filled with all its goodness and grace!

“Jesus, help me to keep my eyes fixed on you today.”

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:

1. The first reading's opening words remind us that we are part of a great people of God to whom God has given a promise: *The Lord God took Abram outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be." Abram put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness.*
 - What do you think these words meant to Abraham, who had no children? What do these words mean to you?
 - In what ways does St. Paul confirm these words in Romans 4:13? *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.*
 - Do you believe that your faith in the Lord Jesus has also been "attributed" to you as an "act of righteousness"?
2. The responsorial psalm begins with these words: *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The LORD is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid? Hear, O LORD, the sound of my call; have pity on me, and answer me. Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks.* The psalm ends with these words: *I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.*
 - In what ways are the beginning words of the psalm a source of hope? What are some ways you can apply these words to any difficult circumstances in your life?
 - What does the psalmist say is the benefit of seeking the Lord in all circumstances? What practical steps can you take this Lent to spend more time seeking God's presence in prayer?
3. The second reading opens with St. Paul telling his brothers and sisters in Philippi to *Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us.* He goes on to remind them that *our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself.* The reading ends with these words: *Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord.*
 - In the opening words, what ways do you think Paul is also calling you to imitate him and other Christians?
 - What do you think St. Paul meant when he said, *our citizenship is in heaven*? What approach can you take this Lent (e.g., prayer, almsgiving, and fasting) that will provide evidence of where your true citizenship resides?
 - Paul so loved his Christian community that he called it his *joy and crown*. Do you see your parish community as your *joy and crown*? What changes could you or the parish make to improve your sense of community?
4. The beginning words of the Gospel reading describes the Transfiguration of the Lord: *Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.* The reading ends with these words: *Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.*
 - In what ways do these words remind us what Jesus endured through the cross and resurrection so that we could be transfigured with him in heaven? Do you consider this future reality as you read the story of Jesus' Transfiguration?
 - In the reading, these words of God the Father are spoken: *This is my chosen Son; listen to him.* Does your experience at Mass, in prayer, or while reading Scripture, reflect the promise that you too can hear Jesus words and be transformed by what you hear and experience? How can you strengthen this reality in your life?
5. The meditation describes *some key promises you can fix your eyes on.* First, *God promises to keep his covenant with you, just as he kept his covenant with Abraham.* Second, *Jesus promises that your citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). You belong to him!* And third, *the Holy Spirit promises that if you fix your eyes on Jesus in prayer every day, you'll begin to see him more clearly, just as the apostles caught a glimpse of him at his transfiguration.* It ends with these words: *Choose one of these promises today, and dwell on it. Repeat it over and over. Fix your heart on the way it reveals God's love for you. Look up to heaven, and let your heart be filled with all its goodness and grace!*
 - In what ways do you believe the three promises described above apply to you?
 - During this grace-filled season of Lent, how can you use one or more of these Scriptural promises during your times of prayer and reflection, so that you can *Fix your heart on the way it reveals God's love for you*?

Take some time now to pray and ask for the grace to use your Lenten practices to help you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus each day? Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

"Jesus, help me to keep my eyes fixed on you today."