

Sunday, June 14, 2020

Genesis 18:1-15 Romans 5:1-8 Matthew 9: 35 -10:8

Faith and Promises

A conversation overheard between a parent and their young child. “Mommy I need you right now.” What do you need me for? I’m busy cleaning the bathroom.” About half an hour later, “Mommy, I need you right now.” What do you need me for? I’m folding the laundry.” Again, a half hour later, “Mommy I need you right now.” What do you need me for? The child a little impatient with the parent runs up to the mom and says, “You are always busy, Mommy, making sure everything is great at home. But this is what I need you for.” The child reaches up puts little arms around the mom jumps up and says, “Mommy I need you right now because you need me to give you a hug.” I’m just making sure I’m holding up my part of the promise. The mother now almost in tears—asks, “What promise?” “That you are always going to love me no matter what you are doing or where we are or how old we both get. You need me to give you a hug to show you how much I love you.”

Promises abound in the Bible from God to people; between one person and another; from people to God; angels to people; between Satan/devil to Jesus, and between God the Father and Jesus. What all of these promises have in common is that there is hope attached to the words that is one person pledges through a statement of some sort so that the other will follow up with a response. God made a promise to Abraham and Sarah that they would be the forebears of many nations. Satan promised Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth if he would bow down and worship him. And you who have made promises to God have heard Jesus’ story and now follow his way of living love. This is your promise to God!

The Bible focuses upon the prophecy of generations before with the promise of the Messiah. This leads us to the unconditional promise of Jesus’ ultimate triumph of love through his death and resurrection. Jesus died to fulfill God’s promise of all those who believe to be reconciled with Him. Through Jesus’ resurrection we may be forgiven but we must believe and have faith that what God says He will do! This unconditional promise is difficult for us to understand because do not always believe that promises will be fulfilled. This is because often times, promises are broken, changed or mostly forgotten.

God enters into a covenant with Abram when he is 99 years old. God tells Abram that he will make him exceedingly numerous. Abram falls on his face, but we are not sure whether it is because he is in shock and awe due to God’s words or he is laughing; we are not told. God then

changes his name from Abram to Abraham with the meaning moving from 'exalted ancestor' to the 'ancestor of a multitude.' God also changes Sarai's name because she too will be blessed and shall give rise to nations. This time Abraham laughed at God- because he was almost 100 and Sarah was 90? It is then that God establishes his covenant with him again!

Soon after this encounter with God, Abraham is near his tent when he welcomes three men. He meets them, and asks them to stay. He invites them to freshen up and have supper with them. Sarah and her servant helpers prepare a meal including cakes and fresh meat. After a while, the men sit together and eat. The guests ask for Sarah and tell Abraham that in a while, they would return and she would have a son. Sarah heard this and laughed for she was too old to have a child. The men heard her laughing but told her again that she would have a son. Sarah denied laughing because it was just not possible at her age. Yet Abraham was asked, "Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?" Just who were these men and how did the Lord appear, speak and state what was going to happen? And how was this promise fulfilled? God was present at that tent meeting and God enabled Sarah to give birth to Isaac.

People make promises all the time. Yet in these last few months there have been a lot of compromises made because of the limitations caused by the pandemic. Plans that were made in January for gatherings, concerts, special family events and celebrations have been cancelled, postponed or rescheduled with out specific dates. Many promises had been made but due to covid19 a lot were broken. But time has evolved these situations from one moment to another and changes are still ongoing each day. Promises can be made but it is important that they are fulfilled. Just like Abraham and Sarah were promised a son and eventually Isaac was born.

Just think about the promises one makes in life. Children learn about 'pinky' promises when making friends and how the friendship might last. Adults prepare for marriage with promise and engagement rings. When weddings occur it is the promises or vows that are central to the celebration and begins marriage. Yet there are other promises we can make through out our lives. If we belong to specific organizations- like Scouting, Guiding, or the Royal Canadian Legion, Lions, Rotary, Optimists or different service clubs, we all make promises in order to fulfill the purpose of the organizations.

As Christians we also make promises. Parents make promises to raise their children in the way of Christ at the time we share in the sacrament of Holy Baptism. They also profess their belief in God, faith in Jesus Christ, and realize that the Spirit leads and guides them. When children are old enough to understand these promises we celebrate with them, the confirmation

of baptismal faith as they reaffirm the promises their parents made. In all these, words stated aloud which tell those listening that promise made have meaning, and that as we profess our beliefs and faith, we promise to do what God calls us to do to the best of our ability.

This is what promises are about but from our Christian understanding we need to believe so that we may faithfully put into action what God has called us to do in Christ's name. As consumers who have not been able to spend money in these last weeks other than at grocery stores and online, and so we have been inundated by advertisements which make different kinds of promises. Some of which just sound too good to believe! How can the frying pan cook rocks with eggs and not take off the slippery surface? Not to mention how magic erasers can work so hard cleaning messes but have not ill effects on the user's hands? Other ads do tell us information that is believable. Did you even know about Microsoft Teams and how doctors are consulting regularly with this online ? The point of advertisements is to make you believe that the product that is being sold is good and you need it. But what happens when the company changes their focus from the product and focuses on the consumer? Volkswagen's new ad campaign is "People First Promise". The car company wants to ensure you that you and your family come first in safety, in caring for your vehicle and in how new car purchases may be made in this time of pandemic. They truly want to make sure that you as the consumer are their priority. Shouldn't this be the same for all companies?

In our reading from Paul's letter to the Romans we read that by having faith in God we will receive specific promises from God. We believe in God and through His grace we have hope that leads and guides us through this life into the next promise—a place in God's heavenly home. But what are we to believe? What does it mean to have faith in God?

As followers of Jesus we are called to have compassion on others and to do what He told his disciples in Matthew 10. He sent them to the lost sheep of Israel and they were to proclaim the good news that "the kingdom of heaven has come near" They had been given authority over unclean spirits and sickness and they were to heal all including the sick, lepers and those with demons. They were to also let peace come upon houses worthy of it wherever they travelled. They were not to worry or be afraid of anything as Jesus had taught them. These disciples were given the authority over unclean spirits and sickness. They were not to worry about anything for as they shared of the coming kingdom they would be rewarded in heaven! This again was a promise of Jesus!

What are the promises of God? God's promises are easy to understand for us:

I will be with you. I will protect you. I will be your strength. I will answer you. I will provide for you. I will give you peace. I will always love you. For many people hearing these promises of God they ask? But what is the catch? Why does God make these promises? What to we have to do? We need to believe that Jesus died for us and that through His love and God's grace we have been justified that is able to reconcile freely with God. This is so that we can have peace within and with God. All this is so that the promise of a heavenly home with God and the hope and glory of God is experienced by all who believe and have faith. Because of faith God's promises are true. What God promises—God will do. You just need to do your part. Believe, have faith in God and know Christ Jesus as your Saviour. We also must experience the Spirit within so that we are guided now and always to live as Jesus taught.

Have faith; live the promise and believe: God loves you and always will.

Let us pray:

God of love we praise you because you keep your promises to us. We have faith and we believe O God help us to live out the promises we have made. Help our unbelief and call us to serve with hope. We ask in the name of Jesus our Saviour. Amen.