

2nd Sunday of Lent- C 2013

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Psalm 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 9:28b-36

What do you want?

In your rush to get here today did you ever ask yourself what you wanted?

What did Abram want? In those ancient times they had no concept of an after-life.

For Abram, immortality was to be found in one's legacy, in one's children and their children's children.

Sara and Abram were rich and possessed large holdings, but they had no one to whom to pass it on.

God honored Abram's faith with the promise of descendants as numerous as the stars.

God honored Abram's deepest desire... and also promised his descendants the lands of Palestine.

We then heard how this ancient contract was sealed by God passing between the split halves of animals.

One doesn't enter into this kind of contract lightly.

The significance of this contract is that the party who fails to live up to their side of the bargain would be subject to the same fate as those butchered animals.

What do you want so profoundly that you would enter into such a contract?

What does Paul want?

He wants the Philippians to be citizens of heaven and not to be concerned with earthly things, things of "shame" and of the "stomach".

These earthly things refer to the old covenant of circumcision and dietary rules.

So... what do you want?

Let's not be self-conscious that this may be selfish question.

If my answer was something that just tickled my pleasure, like a flat-screen TV, it might be.

But I am asking you the question of your life.

What is your most profound desire, the question that most defines your hopes, that contract you would gladly enter, even under the risk of being butchered if you failed?

I'm asking you to want big.

If you were to give me a quick answer now, I would challenge you to think bigger.

Think of something that lasts longer than today, than this month, than this year, longer than a lifetime.

I ask you to want it today and for it to last forever.

We preach that God broke into time with his incarnation two thousand years ago.

We preach that he established his Kingdom, the Kingdom that is here, but not quite yet.

We preach of the fulfillment of the Kingdom in Jesus' second coming, yet we are able to live in it today.

So what can we experience today that will last forever, that we will take with us when we pass to the other side into eternal life?

Instinctively we have some clues.

When I first held my daughter, I remember thinking, "Oh, Dad...that's how you loved me."

What about that kind of love will I be able to take to heaven?

Some experiences may be holy, but not completely. How about my indoor soccer game last Wednesday?

I won't let the fact that we lost 8-4 deter me from thinking I was ominous in goal.

What part of that game can I take to heaven?

My pride in my imagined prowess?

Not likely.

That's barely tolerated at my home, I doubt it would be tolerated in heaven.

But what about the camaraderie with my teammates, maybe the good-humored banter I shared with my opponents, maybe that in our competition we challenged each other to bring our best efforts.

There seems to be something nobler about these aspects of athletic competition.

How can these noble experiences be purged of my selfishness?

My first clue is that most of my good stuff involves others and most of my bad stuff involves me.

My heavenly stuff is about relationships, in serving others. My bad stuff is about me using others for my own designs.

You are involved with living in the Kingdom now.
But, there may be some ways that you are living that weigh down your life,
separate you from what is noble, holy and eternal.

Now not all heavenly experiences are pleasant.
We experience tragedy and grief in our lives.
Sometimes that is when we are most dependent on God for him to share his
hope and consolation with us, to share a little heaven on earth.

That brings us to Jesus.

So what does Jesus want?

He climbed a mountain to pray about it.
He ascended with prayer towards his Father who came to meet him with
divine grace.
He consulted his people's great tradition of the law and the prophets.
His question involved his future path to Jerusalem, his exodus to liberate
God's people, you and me, to free us from death.

So what does Jesus want?

You.

And because that answer makes my question grammatically incorrect, I have
to change my question.
Whom does Jesus want?
And in case you forgot the answer, again it's YOU.

And so I change your question.
The question is bigger now.
Whom do you want?

Are you ready to ascend the mountain?
God awaits you.
Bring your prayer to his table here.
Allow him to fill you with his very presence.
Come, hear him call you his child and transform you into a luminous being.
Allow God to send you with your brothers and sisters here on his mission to
Jerusalem.

God calls you, the Body of Christ, to your own exodus, to liberate his people, to advance his Kingdom on earth, to advance what we can take with us into eternity.