

Year C  
 2 Lent  
 Feb 28, 2010

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18  
 Ps 27  
 Phil 3:17-4:1  
 Luke 13:31-35

Knowing how something is going to turn out isn't always a good thing, is it?

- We go to our doctor and he says *there's a lot of that going around -- should clear itself up in a few days* -- we're happy to hear it
- Go to that same doctor and hear him say *Huh..... I'm very concerned.....this is clearly something serious* -- well, we're just not so happy to hear that are we?
- And..... We have two lessons today that tell us how things -- particularly, two journeys -- are going to turn out

The first is this passage from Genesis about Abram -- and knowing a little of his back story will help us here

- Remember that Abram used to live in Ur -- a city that is in the southern part of what we now call Iraq
- And he had this experience of God --
- he heard God say *leave your county, your family, your father's house and go to the place I will show you.... And I will make you a great nation*
- Now for someone living in a tribal culture --and Abram certainly was -- that was a frightening request
- Tribe and tribal connections play a huge part of the individual's identity -- the who, what and where of their lives
- But Abram said OK -- even though God never exactly said where this place would be that he would lead him to
- And there we find Abram this morning -- in what we now call Israel/Palestine -- about 600 miles away from where he started

And Abram is having some doubts:

- *You said I'd be a great nation God....but....I don't have any children*
- *My wife Sarah has not been able to have children, and my nearest relative is in Damascus -- another 200 miles away -- and doesn't have my cell phone number or e-mail address*
- *What kind of deal is this?*
- *And God says count the stars....and of course Abram knows that's impossible -- there are far too many*
- *Stick with me God says and your descendents will outnumber the stars*
- *And Abram does -- trusting that even though he can't figure out how it is going to happen -- his faithfulness will bring great fruitfulness*
- *A good ending*

Our gospel passage offers us what looks like a very different ending

- *We've jumped from the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke's gospel last week -- when we heard about Jesus figuring out what it means to be God's beloved son -- to the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, where Jesus has been on the road towards Jerusalem for a while*
- *And well meaning Pharisees warn him that he's in danger from Herod, and Jesus replies *Big deal -- I have a lot to accomplish, territory to cover**
- *And this story is going to end in Jerusalem -- where they kill prophets instead of listening to them*
- *This story is going to end in death*

Two very different views of how things are going to end

- *And yet they are offered to us together this morning to support us in our own journey through lent*
- *Our own journey of exploring our relationship with God -- and in the light of God, relationship with our neighbors and ourselves.*

So often in our journey we're just like Abram -- we have no notion that God's out there with a plan for us, and we get anxious about it

- How easy it would have been for Abram to bail out -- *this isn't making sense to me God – I'm outta here!*
- How easy it is for us
- Life comes at us.... Things happen and in our limited vision we so easily judge them as “good” or “bad” for us
- And we lose faith that God is working his purpose out for us -- in us, through us -- to extend his redeeming love to us and to the world
- 
- we do well to remember that we're not asked to figure it all out
- we're only asked to be faithful – as Abram was asked
- and to believe the promise that our faithfulness will indeed bring fruitfulness
- maybe in ways we never even dreamed of

That's true of us as individuals, yes -- but equally true for us as a congregation, especially one in transition.

- We don't have to figure it out -- we're only asked to be faithful

And part of that faithfulness means following Jesus

- Yes, through the baptismal waters, through his teachings and healings
- And on to Jerusalem -- the place of certain death
- Now that sounds like anything but good news to us, probably because we focus so much on the death of the body -- that truly once in a lifetime experience we are all going to go through
- But the death we are called to experience comes far more frequently than that final bodily death

- It comes everyday -- as we are called to remember yet again that being faithful to God's call means letting go of our selves
- Of the ability to figure things out, to be in charge, to understand
- To remember that in our journey, to quote one of the hymns we sing, *we walk by faith and not by sight*

It's a heck of a way to go on journey -- not knowing, not seeing, not completely understanding

- But trusting that the one who promises is faithful to that promise -- with more than enough vision for all of us together
- As we just prayed in our psalm  
*Oh tarry, and await the Lord's pleasure*  
*Be strong, and he shall comfort your heart*

May it be so!

Amen.