

Hymn

Scripture Romans 4: 1-17

Verses 4-5, ‘If you’re a hard worker and do a good job, you deserve your pay; we don’t call your wages a gift. But if you see that the job is too big for you, that it’s something only God can do, and you trust God to do it – you could never do it for yourself no matter how long and hard you worked – well, that trusting–God–to–do–it is what gets you set right with God, by God. Sheer gift.’

Prayer Let us pray – Creator God, you created humankind to work hard and do a good job, but some of the jobs you offer are too big for our imaginations. Help us to let go of some of our pride when we see that we can’t handle a job alone which we know you want to have done. Show us how to share that job with others. We thank you for hearing our prayers when we ask for guidance. Help us to see that guidance in whatever form it is given as we attempt to follow in Jesus’ way, Amen.

Lesson The story of Abraham and Sarah, which begins with Noah in Genesis 9 twists through many chapters of Genesis. With the story of Abram who becomes Abraham and Sarai who becomes Sarah, we meet God who promises new life to those who hear, trust, and follow. There are no guarantees of what the future may hold, only the promise of an ongoing mutual relationship for those who stick with it.

The story of Abram having to leave the world of his ancestors impressed Paul more than a thousand years after Abraham’s death. In becoming a Christian missionary, Saul the Pharisee had made a radical break with his culture and the faith of his ancestors, and had entered into a new relationship with God, founded on God’s promise of new life in Christ. Abraham and Sarah had set out into an unknown future with no map; they had to think “outside the box” and so did Paul.

Lent is a time for engaging our new life in Christ more deeply, risking new levels of trust. The purpose of Lent is not to dwell on suffering, or to spend 40 days bemoaning our sins and wickedness. Lent is about engaging in the ongoing process of renewal, regeneration and new birth. It is about encouraging us to trust, and to risk, going forth and being sent out with promise of new life.

Lent may require us to “think outside the box” of Christian piety and religiosity as we do this, just as Abram and Sarai had to break with their past, and Saul the Pharisee with his. When Saul the Pharisee became Paul the Apostle as we know him, he brought new words, images and community structures into being by trustfully following Jesus into new life. At this point in the 21st century, God may well be inviting us to rethink how we do ministry with men in light of the socio-geographies of the times we live in.

Lent is for listening for that call in our own lives. Lent is for careful thinking about how to step into the as yet unmapped future for AOTS and promoting ministry with men. Lent is for seeking to deepen our relationship to God and trust the picture of new life in Christ. And lent is for identifying the breaks with the past that we need to make in order to respond to the promises of God.

Discussion What are the walls which form the “box” in which we find ourselves?
List the ideas (wildest dreams) which God may be inviting you to consider.

Prayer Let us pray – God, we love what we have within the groups of men we know as AOTS. Help us to share what we have, what you have given us, with others. Help us to identify ideas and assist us, coax us, prod us to make things happen to speed the coming of your kingdom here on earth. Amen.

This meditation is based in part on material dated 2005 from Rev. A. V. Askew of the Episcopal Church

Coming events ‘Breaking the Ice’ - Manitou Conference
‘Maritime Men’s Conference’ – Maritime Conference

Book of the month the book of Genesis – ‘relive’ the “origins” stories