



BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

Lent 1, Year B
February 18, 2018

[RCL] Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

Genesis 9:8-17

Since the time of humanity's disobedience in the Garden, covenants have been the means by which we re-enter into relationship with God. It's important to note that God's covenant extends past Noah through his descendants, to all of creation. This shows a significant point about the grace of God: it extends beyond all sense of righteousness on our part. The life of creation is by God's grace, Noah is the righteous one that God beholds, but the payment of this righteousness is not just salvation for Noah, but the promise of life for the world. God's faithfulness to his covenantal promises is a theme that runs throughout Scripture and unites the likes of Noah and Jesus. Bound by God's grace, we need not simply bear the burdens of our flesh, but rather we may rejoice in that flesh which God has promised to both keep and redeem.

- In what ways can Noah be seen as a type of Christ?
- How do we rectify our understanding of grace with our understanding of justice (e.g., is it fair that others will benefit by God's acknowledgement of Noah's righteousness)?

Psalm 25:1-9

This portion of Psalm 25 expresses the contrasts between God's way and the ways of humanity. The ways of humanity are enmity with others, scheming and treachery, shame, disappointment, and ultimately, sin. God's ways are everlasting compassion and love, grace, faithfulness, and ultimately, salvation. The Psalmist recognizes not only the disparity between these two paths, but also the necessity that God should lead us on them – that we cannot walk in the ways of God without his grace. "Gracious and upright is the Lord; therefore he teaches sinners in his way. He guides the humble in doing right and teaches his way to the lowly." Ultimately, our sins are overcome by his saving love.

- In what ways may we ask God to lead us on our paths today?
- What must we surrender to God in order to follow him?

1 Peter 3:18-22

1 Peter exposes the new covenant under which God calls the unrighteous to himself. As we saw in the reading from Genesis, God's covenant with one righteous man, Noah, extends his grace to all;

the new covenant, by which we are now being saved, extends that grace even further. The promised faithfulness of God is fully realized in the person of Jesus Christ, who now sits at the right hand of the Father. By baptism, we are initiated into Christ's body and given a righteousness that human beings cannot attain in and of themselves. By baptism, we die to ourselves and are resurrected to a new covenant and a new relationship with God.

- Which sins still keep you from living fully into your new spiritual life?
- In what ways can we proclaim the good news to others who are also still imprisoned by their selfishness and sinfulness?

Mark 1:9-15

Mark's narratives of the baptism of Jesus, his temptation in the wilderness, and the commencement of his ministry are the sparsest of all the Synoptic Gospels. But his no-frills retelling of these three events, in short order, reveals their deepest truths. The baptism of our Lord stands as a significant transition from an early life that (according to Mark's omissions) is essentially without note, to a life that is driven by ministry and marked by a growing intensity of purpose toward the cross. Jesus moves seamlessly from *the beloved* to *the tempted*. He is waited on by God's messengers, so that he might be the messenger of the coming Kingdom to those who are in desperate need.

With a handful of verses, we can begin to discern what it truly means to be God's beloved Son – to endure a baptism of repentance, which he does not need; to face the temptations that are part and parcel of human flesh, so that he may know our plight; to be waited on by those who are closest to God, in order to bring a message of good news to those who are furthest from him. To be a beloved son of God is to live a life for others, in order that they might live the life that God intended.

- If Jesus' baptism is the beginning of his ministry, what does that mean for our own baptisms and ministries?
- If Jesus does not need a baptism of repentance, what might be his purpose for being baptized?

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