

## Bible Tuesday for Pentecost VI, 2019

### Genesis 18:1-10

The Lord appeared to Abraham<sup>\*</sup> by the oaks<sup>\*</sup> of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup>He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. <sup>3</sup>He said, 'My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. <sup>4</sup>Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. <sup>5</sup>Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on— since you have come to your servant.' So they said, 'Do as you have said.' <sup>6</sup>And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures<sup>\*</sup> of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.' <sup>7</sup>Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. <sup>8</sup>Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. <sup>9</sup>They said to him, 'Where is your wife Sarah?' And he said, 'There, in the tent.' <sup>10</sup>Then one said, 'I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him.

The Oaks of Mamre. It is impossible to know if this is a cluster of a few oaks trees or a grove or a whole forest. What we do know is that in Abraham's and his progeny's lives, this is an important location. Here, in this story, Abraham either meets God himself, or three angels (the story goes back and forth between calling the three visitors "the Lord and two angels" and "the angel of the Lord and two angels". Later, when Sarah dies, Abraham approaches the Mamre locals and buys a small parcel of land which has a cave on it. There he inter Sarah, is later interred himself. Isaac and Jacob are also later interred there.

This story is an excellent example of Middle Eastern hospitality. Abraham sees strangers in the distances, runs out to meet them, provides water to rinse them, feeds them, waits on them while they eat, and then looks for a blessing from them. The blessing that Abraham and Sarah received is that Sarah was declared to soon be with child. If Abraham had not received these strangers, it would have been a sign of antagonism to the strangers who could rightly declare war on Abraham if they so choose.

### Psalm 15

O Lord, who may abide in your tent?

Who may dwell on your holy hill?

<sup>2</sup> Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,  
and speak the truth from their heart;

<sup>3</sup> who do not slander with their tongue,  
and do no evil to their friends,  
nor take up a reproach against their neighbours;

<sup>4</sup> in whose eyes the wicked are despised,  
but who honour those who fear the Lord;  
who stand by their oath even to their hurt;

<sup>5</sup> who do not lend money at interest,  
and do not take a bribe against the innocent.  
Those who do these things shall never be moved.

Liturgically, Psalm 15 is commonly used in Jewish funerals as a form of eulogy. When it was originally written, scholars think it was a “gathering hymn” or “entrance hymn” for men entering the worship space at the time of King David.

The tent referred to in the first verse is the Tent of Meeting, that is, the portable “Temple” which was made by the Israelites while they wandered the wilderness under the leadership of Moses. This tent was the precursor to the Temple Solomon built which was later rebuilt by Hezekiah, and then Herod the Great. The “holy hill” is Mount Zion in Jerusalem, a hill within the city on which the Tent of Meeting was erected during King David’s time and on which King Solomon built the Temple.

The psalmist proclaims that only those who follow the Law of Moses perfectly may enter the Tent of Meeting. In fact, all male Israelites were expected to enter the Tent of Meeting, if ritually clean, to offer the prescribed sacrifices.

Colossians 1:15-28

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; <sup>16</sup>for in <sup>\*</sup>him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He himself is before all things, and in <sup>\*</sup>him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

<sup>21</sup> And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup>he has now reconciled <sup>\*</sup>in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him—<sup>23</sup>provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

<sup>24</sup> I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. <sup>25</sup>I became its servant according to God’s commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, <sup>26</sup>the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup>To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup>It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Starting Christmas Eve, the Great Thanksgiving, which the pastor chants or speaks immediately before the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might...)

proclaims this same idea, that in Jesus we “love the God made visible, so that we may come to love the God whom we cannot see.” What a profound gift God gives us, containing all Godliness in human form, that humans may glimpse God’s wonder and come to do that which we were created to do, love God.

Paul moves on to bolster his opening statement that Jesus is God. While in Philippians, Paul quotes an early Christian hymn which makes the same argument, here Paul spells it out in correspondence. Jesus is God, always has been God, is one with God before all was created. It is through Jesus that all creation came to be. Because Jesus is fully human and fully divine, when he died as a perfect adherer to the Law, and rose again as a resurrected human, he created the path whereby all people who believe in who Jesus is and what he did can also resurrect to life forever with God. In Hebrews 12, the author proclaims this same teaching, saying that Jesus is the “pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”

It is unclear what Paul means when he suggests that somehow Jesus’ suffering is incomplete but that Paul’s own suffering for the sake of the church fills in some of the gaps of Jesus’ suffering.

The mystery of which Paul speaks appears to be the wonder of “the Word made flesh”, that God chose to love humanity despite being completely rejected by idol worshipping humanity, and that God chose to reveal this love by becoming human and setting aside all godly qualities. This revelation of God’s self to the world is not merely for Jews but for all people!

Luke 10:38-42

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup>She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. <sup>40</sup>But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.’ <sup>41</sup>But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; <sup>42</sup>there is need of only one thing. \* Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.’

They – Jesus and the disciples and apostles.

On their way – Jesus has now “set his face toward Jerusalem” so they are on their way to Jerusalem.

“Martha” and her sister “Mary” – In other gospels we are told that Mary and Martha are sisters of Lazarus. In this section of Luke, there is no mention of Lazarus but only of the two sisters. The familiarity with which Martha approaches Jesus to enlist his help in motivating her sister suggests that there is a prior relationship between she and Jesus.

Note, Jesus does not scold Martha, but merely states her condition. He does not tell Martha to ease up and come sit at his feet. Rather, he lets her do as she sees fit, but also lets Mary do as she sees fit. He will not scold Mary for joining the disciples and apostles at Jesus' feet.

In this case, a woman's place is not in the kitchen but rather in the crowd of disciples receiving what Jesus has to give.

We are not told whether Jesus and the male disciples and apostles got up at some point and helped get dinner together or if Jesus looked to Martha, alone, to provide for this crowd .