

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

28 FEBRUARY 2021

Lent Devotion/Day 12/Second Sunday, February 28, 2021

Genesis 12:1-4a/Psalm 121/Romans 4:1-5, 13-17/John 3:1-17 or Matthew 17:1-9

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Meditation: It is not hard to muster sympathy for the sons of Zebedee whom Jesus called forth from their fishing boats to be his disciples, to help usher in God's reign. Fishing, after all, is immanently satisfying. Put a worm on a hook or throw a net into the shallows and you have dinner for the night. But now, in a twist of fate, these fishermen find themselves following a carpenter's son from town to dusty town, preaching, teaching, and malingering with the outcasts of Judea. There was no Kingdom, no army, no treasury, no identifiable citizenry. Just blisters, sore feet, and gnawing hunger. At the end of the day as they lay down to sleep, they surely must have longed for their nets; simpler lives in which a day's work yielded visible rewards. It is no wonder that when these same disciples accompanied Jesus up a mountain and his face began to shine and they heard a voice from heaven, they, in their appetite for something tangible, asked to build tents and remain there.

We are no different today. We flock to churches with big steeples, spectacular music, charismatic preachers, and large crowds. We exult when our political party is in power. We want to remain in the world of rich reward, of immediate and tangible good. We are impatient when our faith does not yield results, immediate and concrete enough to be counted – as bodies, dollars, square footage, or senate seats. We are more comfortable with the things we can readily control, or that can be manipulated by an act of will or ego. We are not very good at living in mere hope.

For Christians, our faith is nurtured by memory and hope. We recall the patriarch Abraham who is deemed a knight of faith – an adventurer who could not see or touch the nation that God promised to him, but who responded by faith in love and obedience to God. Neither is our true home founded in those things we produce daily – whether fish, dollars, or other spectacles of success. Our home is in the One whose life was dashed on the rocks of imperial power but in whose resurrection we are promised new life, for now and eternity. In the waters of baptism we find our hope and our home. The season of Lent constitutes a protracted lesson in loosening our grip on those things which we grasp, and to see how they, in their goodness, point to the One who is to come in fullness, Jesus Christ.

Prayer: *Gracious God, father of Abraham, Andrew, James and John, and all those who journey forth in faith, we pause to take notice of those things we grip so tightly as to restrict our love of God and neighbor. We are grateful for the fruits of our work and our will, but teach us, we ask, not to see them as reflections of our worth; but instead, in their goodness, as windows to your gracious fullness. In this season may we glimpse your glory in ordinary things around us – in our friends, family, work, home and nation. But more importantly teach us to resist the idolatry of resting too contently in any of these. Remind us instead of our baptism, the waters in which all things are transformed as they flow finally into you. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our memory and our hope. Amen.*

-from **Keeping Lent, A devotional journal.** Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.