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**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION**

**SUNDAY 6 MARCH 2022- 2nd Sunday of Lent**

**COLLECT**

Almighty God,

by the prayer and discipline of Lent

may we enter into the mystery of Christ’s sufferings,

and by following in his Way

come to share in his glory;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Psalm 27**

1    The Lord is my light and my salvation;

whom then shall I fear?  ♦

The Lord is the strength of my life;

of whom then shall I be afraid?

2    When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes,

came upon me to eat up my flesh,  ♦

they stumbled and fell.

3    Though a host encamp against me,

my heart shall not be afraid,  ♦

and though there rise up war against me,

yet will I put my trust in him.

4    One thing have I asked of the Lord

and that alone I seek:  ♦

that I may dwell in the house of the Lord

all the days of my life,

5    To behold the fair beauty of the Lord  ♦

and to seek his will in his temple.

6    For in the day of trouble

he shall hide me in his shelter;  ♦

in the secret place of his dwelling shall he hide me

and set me high upon a rock.

7    And now shall he lift up my head  ♦

above my enemies round about me;

8    Therefore will I offer in his dwelling an oblation

with great gladness;  ♦

I will sing and make music to the Lord.

9    Hear my voice, O Lord, when I call;  ♦

have mercy upon me and answer me.

10  My heart tells of your word, ‘Seek my face.’  ♦

Your face, Lord, will I seek.

11  Hide not your face from me,  ♦

nor cast your servant away in displeasure.

12  You have been my helper;  ♦

leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

13  Though my father and my mother forsake me,  ♦

the Lord will take me up.

14  Teach me your way, O Lord;  ♦

lead me on a level path,

because of those who lie in wait for me.

15  Deliver me not into the will of my adversaries,  ♦

for false witnesses have risen up against me,

and those who breathe out violence.

16  I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord  ♦

in the land of the living.

17  Wait for the Lord;

be strong and he shall comfort your heart;  ♦

wait patiently for the Lord.

**Genesis 15: 1-12, 17-18**

### God’s Covenant with Abram

**15**After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.’ **2**But Abram said, ‘O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2015&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-363a)] **3**And Abram said, ‘You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.’ **4**But the word of the Lord came to him, ‘This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.’ **5**He brought him outside and said, ‘Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ **6**And he believed the Lord; and the Lord[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2015&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-367b)] reckoned it to him as righteousness.

**7**Then he said to him, ‘I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.’ **8**But he said, ‘O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?’ **9**He said to him, ‘Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon.’ **10**He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. **11**And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

**12**As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.

**17**When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire-pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. **18**On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.

**Luke 13: 31-35**

### The Lament over Jerusalem

**31**At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, ‘Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.’ **32**He said to them, ‘Go and tell that fox for me,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+13%3A31-35&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-25543a)] “Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. **33**Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem.” **34**Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! **35**See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+13%3A31-35&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-25546b)] you say, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”’

***A Reflection from Hannah…***

‘Do not be afraid, Abram.’

When God says this to Abraham, he becomes the first in a great pedigree of biblical figures to be told not to fear. God says the same thing to Isaac and Jacob, to Moses and Joshua. It’s clearly worth saying! Indeed, Jesus says it on the night before his death- ‘do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid’ (John 14: 27).

What does it mean? We can sometimes assume that because these words are spoken over us it means that there is nothing bad, or scary or fear-inducing in the world. That doesn’t match the reality, and if it were true would make a mockery of Abraham by suggesting that he is just, frankly, being a bit of a wimp and should stop worrying.

The reason God tells Abraham not to be afraid is because, in fact, there is plenty to fear. His life isn’t going to be safe or easy just because he lives it in the conscious company of the Lord. It’s God’s company that enables us to face fear with true courage. In fact, that is what God goes on to say to Abraham- ‘I am your shield’.

It’s similar in the Gospel reading. The pharisees are stoking fear around Jesus. They warn him that he is not safe and danger lurks ahead. Jesus responds by facing the fear and, indeed takes it a step further when he spells out what will happen to him. And in this passage we are given a new image for the saving power of God. Whereas in Genesis God is described as a shield; in this story, Christ describes himself as a mother hen. That may feel somewhat surprising!

But there is a powerful lesson here... and a hint about what is in store for Jesus. Although we’re in the countryside, we’ve probably never seen what happens when a chicken-coop is on fire. The mother hen gathers her chicks, and gives her life for theirs. People who’ve experienced this have found a dead, burnt hen in the aftermath, with a clutch of living chicks underneath, whom she protected from the fire. That is the height, depth and breadth of the love of Christ- who gives himself for us.

So when we hear those words ‘do not be afraid’, *how* do we hear them? This week’s readings remind us that when we are filled with God’s love we can face the horrors of this world head-on; confident in the ultimate promise of life triumphing over death. In doing so, the Holy Spirit equips us to search out the darkest corners and to be ministers of light. Amen.