

SOUTHWOOD UNITED CHURCH DEVOTIONAL SERIES

LENT 2026 – YEAR A – WEEK 2

Sunday, March 1

Reading: Genesis 12:1–4 The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Thought: This is called the Abrahamic covenant. It is an agreement between God and Abraham. There is a difference between a covenant and a contract. In a covenant there are promises, but no penalty for non-compliance. It is what used to be called a “gentleman’s agreement.” The responsibility of each side is understood and is respected. God has made a promise to Abraham if he does what God has requested. What covenants have you entered into?

Prayer: God of Abraham – thank you for the promises you have made to me and to all people. I want to experience the blessing of being your child.

Monday, March 2

Reading: Romans 4:3 What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Thought: One of the fun things to do when reading the Bible is to find connections between the different stories. Last week we read about Adam and Eve, this week we are reading about Abraham. One connection between these two stories is belief. Abraham believed God, Adam and Eve didn’t. That may sound a little black and white, but it is the truth. It was Abraham’s belief in God’s power and goodness and truth that led him to not only to hear God, but to do what God told him to do. This is an important idea, for it is our belief that calls for our obedience to God. If we didn’t believe in God and that God wants good for us, why would we do what God is calling us to do?

Prayer: God of all Bible stories – I believe in you and the lessons contained in your Holy Word. Help me to understand what they are to teach me.

Tuesday, March 3

Reading: Romans 4:13 It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

Thought: This verse illustrates an important concept. Being a Christian certainly means living a moral life, but that is not all a Christian life entails. It also requires “righteousness that comes through faith.” Yes, as Christians we do our best to live a “righteous” life, following the moral code and example of Jesus, but that is not enough. We need to have faith, we need to believe. And then - wow, we inherit the entire world. Now that’s a promise! How do you respect following the law and following the faith?

Prayer: God of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures – help me to lead the life exemplified by your son and to be strong in my faith and in my belief.

Wednesday, March 4

Reading: Romans 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham

Thought: Yesterday we thought about how God's promise comes through righteousness, that is, through belief and faith. Today, the message is that it is guaranteed to ALL of Abraham's offspring, not just those of the law, meaning the Hebrews. All who believe in God and seek to obey God are righteous through faith – all those are saved. You only have to believe and through believing obey to receive the rich promises of God. What riches have you received?

Prayer: Loving God – once again I give thanks for the promises you have made and the grace you extend to me and to all believers.

Thursday, March 5

Reading: John 3:5-6 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Thought: Today, I am struck by the thought that we have a spiritual life just as we have a physical life. Our baptism symbolizes our rebirth into a spiritual life in addition to our physical life. This is being born again, into a life that embraces the spirit, and what a life that is. A Spirit-filled life is one filled with awe and wonder and incredible color. Oh, for sure, some days may seem dull and drab, or even dark and dismal, but if we tap into that Holy Spirit that lives within even those days are worth living. Have you felt reborn?

Prayer: Teacher Jesus – it is with gratitude that I read of your life. I want to have the life of those reborn into a life filled with your Holy Spirit.

Friday, March 6

Reading: Matthew 17:1–2 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

Thought: We are all called to be transformed, just as Jesus was transfigured. Our faces may not "shine like the sun" but our eyes can reflect the glory of God and the wonder of the resurrection. Our clothes may not be "white as the light" but our thoughts and actions can be pure and clean. We may not have seen the transfiguration, but we have witnessed the changes in our lives and the lives of others who follow Jesus. Are you seeking to be transformed in this season of Lent?

Prayer: Holy Spirit – enter my life, transform me into what I was created to do and be.

Saturday, March 7

Reading: Psalm 121:1-3 I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber.

Thought: Look up! Open your eyes! Find the big picture and realize this simple yet profound thing that the all-powerful God watches over you and helps you. Yes, God made heaven and earth and God made you too. God watches over you endlessly, without pause. God cares, God loves, God is with you. Amen

Prayer: God of all life – I lift my eyes to you for my salvation and true life. Guide me and watch over me as I walk this faith journey.

Complete Lectionary Readings for the Second Sunday in Lent - Year A

Genesis 12:1–4a **2** The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

2 “I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.^[a]

3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth

will be blessed through you.”^[b]

4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.

Psalm 121 **Psalm 121**

A song of ascents.

1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?

2 My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

3 He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;

4 indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

6 the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

7 The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;

8 the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

New International Version (NIV)

Romans 4:1–5 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? **2** If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. **3** What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”^[a]

4 Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. **5** However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.

Romans 4:13-17 It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. **14** For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, **15** because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. **16** Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. **17** As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.”^[a] He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

John 3:1–17 or **Jesus Teaches Nicodemus**

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.^[a]”

⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You^[c] must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”^[d]

⁹ “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.^[e] ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,^[f] ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”^[g]

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him

Matthew 17:1–9 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

⁴ Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” ⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.