

Second Sunday in Lent, March 5

The Collect and Psalm will be read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Pray.

The Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel will be read from the International Children's Bible.

The Collect: O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Genesis 12:1-4a

12 Then the Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives and your father's family. Go to the land I will show you.

2 I will make you a great nation,
and I will bless you.

I will make you famous.

And you will be a blessing to others.

3 I will bless those who bless you.

I will place a curse on those who harm you.

And all the people on earth

will be blessed through you."

4 So Abram left Haran as the Lord had told him. And Lot went with him.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Psalm: Psalm 121

1 I lift up my eyes to the hills; *

from where is my help to come?

2 My help comes from the Lord, *

the maker of heaven and earth.

3 He will not let your foot be moved *

and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.

4 Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel *

shall neither slumber nor sleep;

5 The Lord himself watches over you; *

the Lord is your shade at your right hand,

6 So that the sun shall not strike you by day, *

nor the moon by night.

7 The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; *

it is he who shall keep you safe.

8 The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, *

from this time forth for evermore.

Epistle: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

4 So what can we say about Abraham, the father of our people? What did he learn about faith? 2 If Abraham was made right by the things he did, then he had a reason to brag. But he could not brag before God. 3 The Scripture says, "Abraham believed God. And that faith made him right with God."

4 When a person works, his pay is not given to him as a gift. He earns the pay he gets.

5 But a person cannot do any work that will make him right with God. So he must trust in God. Then God accepts his faith, and that makes him right with God. God is the One who can make even those who are evil right in his sight.

13 Abraham and his descendants received the promise that they would get the whole world. But Abraham did not receive that promise through the law. He received it because he was right with God through his faith. 14 If people could receive what God promised by following the law, then faith is worthless. And God's promise to Abraham is worthless, 15 because the law can only bring God's anger. But if there is no law, then there is nothing to disobey.

16 So people receive God's promise by having faith. This happens so that the promise can

be a free gift. And if the promise is a free gift, then all of Abraham's children can have that promise. The promise is not only for those people that live under the law of Moses. It is for anyone who lives with faith like Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written in the Scriptures: "I am making you a father of many nations." This is true before God. Abraham believed in God—the God who gives life to the dead and decides that things will happen that have not yet happened.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: John 3:1-17

3 There was a man named Nicodemus who was one of the Pharisees. He was an important Jewish leader. 2 One night Nicodemus came to Jesus. He said, "Teacher, we know that you are a teacher sent from God. No one can do the miracles you do, unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth. Unless you are born again, you cannot be in God's kingdom."

4 Nicodemus said, "But if a man is already old, how can he be born again? He cannot enter his mother's body again. So how can he be born a second time?"

5 But Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth. Unless you are born from water and the Spirit, you cannot enter God's kingdom. 6 A person's body is born from his human parents. But a person's spiritual life is born from the Spirit. 7 Don't be surprised when I tell you, 'You must all be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wants to go. You hear the wind blow. But you don't know where the wind comes from or where it is going. It is the same with every person who is born from the Spirit."

9 Nicodemus asked, "How can all this be possible?"

10 Jesus said, "You are an important teacher in Israel. But you still don't understand these things? 11 I tell you the truth. We talk about what we know. We tell about what we have seen. But you don't accept what we tell you. 12 I have told you about things here on earth,

but you do not believe me. So surely you will not believe me if I tell you about the things of heaven! 13 The only one who has ever gone up to heaven is the One who came down from heaven—the Son of Man.

14 “Moses lifted up the snake in the desert. It is the same with the Son of Man. The Son of Man must be lifted up too. 15 Then everyone who believes in him can have eternal life.

16 “For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son. God gave his Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life. 17 God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world guilty, but to save the world through him.

The Gospel of the Lord

On March 8 we celebrate the life of Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy, Priest. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

G. A. Studdert Kennedy was born in Leeds, England, in 1883, one of nine children. His father, William Studdert Kennedy, was vicar in Leeds. Studdert Kennedy earned a degree in classics and divinity in 1904 at Trinity College, Dublin. After his ordination, he served parishes in Rugby and Worcester.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Studdert Kennedy volunteered as a chaplain to soldiers on the Western Front. Along with the spiritual comfort he gave to the wounded and dying, he was famous for handing out Woodbine cigarettes to the soldiers, who called him “Woodbine Willie.”

He received the Military Cross in 1917 for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during the attack on Messines Ridge on the Somme. He had volunteered for a number of tasks carried out under heavy fire, including bringing in three wounded men from the battlefield. One story re-told by the BBC “tells of him crawling out to a working party putting up wire in front of their trench. A nervous soldier challenged him, asking who he was, and he said ‘The Church.’ When the soldier asked what the Church was doing out there, he replied ‘Its job.’”

Studdert Kennedy's religious poetry is represented in the lyric of the hymn, "Not here for high and holy things" (The Hymnal 1982, #9). His verse, some based on his experience as war-time military chaplain, was published in the volumes *Rough Rhymes of a Padre* (1918) and *More Rough Rhymes* (1919). He also published a collection of sermons entitled *I Believe: Sermons on the Apostles' Creed* (1928). His later poems and prose works express the Christian socialism and pacifism he adopted during his war years. He eventually worked for the Industrial Christian Fellowship. On one of his speaking tours on their behalf, he became ill, and he died in Liverpool on March 8, 1929.

Studdert Kennedy remains a powerful influence on the pacifist cause and anti-capitalist critiques, and his many writings have inspired figures such as the former Archbishop of Capetown, South Africa, Desmond Tutu, and the German Reformed theologian, Jurgen Moltmann.

Let us pray: Glorious God, we give thanks for high and holy things as well as the common things of earth. Awaken us to recognize your presence in each other and in all creation, so that we, like Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, may love and magnify you as the holy, undivided Trinity; who lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**