



BENEFICE BULLETIN

Church News for

Bedale, Burrill, Leeming and Thornton Watlass

25th February 2024

The Second Sunday of Lent

OUR PRAYERS ARE ASKED FOR

Gaynor, Bel Newman, Mark Newman, Lesley Hall, Delma Bode, John Hall, Donna Bradley, George, Olive Robinson, Harry Scorer, Terry Gregory, Jack, Kath Finkill, Amanda, David, Chris, Liz, Tracey, Sue, Pam Kenyon, Arthur Lightfoot, Alison, Robin, Kath Moore, Tim, Dan, and John Pickard.

RIP

Gary Hurworth, John Kitching, Margaret Carling,
Brenda Saunders, and Timothy Clapham
May they rest in peace and rise in glory

Collect

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading - Genesis 17.1–7, 15, 16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.'

Second Reading - Romans 4.13–25

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings

wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations')—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations', according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.' He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith 'was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now the words, 'it was reckoned to him', were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Gospel Reading - Mark 8.31–38

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Post Communion Prayer

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts; kindle in us the fire of your Spirit that when your Christ comes again we may shine as lights before his face; who is alive and reigns now and for ever. Amen.

COMMENTARY ON THE READINGS

God's covenant is based on his faith in us. God calls us to respond by faith in him. This may mean behaving at times in a costly, counter-cultural way.

Genesis 17.1-7, 15-16

This is the second of four Old Testament covenants between God and humanity (cf. Genesis 12 and 15). Abram had doubted he would be the ancestor of a great nation as his wife Sarai was barren. So Sarai

gave her slave girl, Hagar, to Abram to have a child through her. When Hagar became pregnant, Sarai became jealous for Hagar's son, Ishmael, would become Abram's heir and Sarai's position would be displaced.

God remains faithful to his original promise but with conditions: Abram must live blamelessly before God. God will make this covenant with Abraham's descendants, too. As a sign, God changes Abram's name to Abraham, meaning 'ancestor of multitudes'. Sarai's name is also changed – to Sarah. At the age of 90 she would bear a son (Isaac) and become 'mother of nations'. Sarah is the mother of the children of promise (Romans 9.9).

Christians are 'children of the promise' – our roots are in a relationship with God that came from the nation of Israel. Being called 'children of the promise' helps us focus on what God promises and on what we have agreed to give in return. Christ's covenant is based on unconditional love. This can become watered down to 'Do what you like and God will forgive you when you get it wrong.' It is good to be reminded that if the promise means anything, it demands something special. God initiates this covenant, but requires human beings to respond. Abraham must live blamelessly. 'Blameless' suggests he must offer his life as a sacrifice to God. Only by doing so will he fulfil God's plan for him.

Romans 4.13-25

Writing to the Christian community in Rome, some 23 years after Christ's death, Paul describes his faith and how it affects his life. Here he focuses on how God's promise (covenant) is given and received by faith. Abraham's faith is the kind that Christians are called to have: even when there is little reason for hope, we still believe (v. 18). When we have received good news of God's love for us, why do we often feel we are in hopeless situations? Surely being children of the promise should mean that nothing ever feels hopeless? Christian faith regards human nature as fallen: from God's presence, prey to temptations, distortions and perversions in a fallen world. This makes God's covenant (his rescue plan) more extraordinary than if it had been offered to a world of few problems and little pain. Even more remarkable is that God was willing to offer himself – in Jesus Christ – to establish this covenant not only in the minds of his people but in their hearts.

Mark 8.31-38

Mark leaves no doubt that Jesus knew he would suffer to the point of painful execution. This was God's way to defeat the power of evil for ever. And it was by his resurrection that Christ would offer the way of life rather than death. This is the first occasion where Jesus predicts his death and reveals the nature of his Messiahship (cf. Mark 9.31 and 10.33-34). Many anticipated a Messiah who would establish a political kingdom. Here the promise had been misinterpreted in terms of supremacy over all others. This is not Jesus' way.

The way of love is about sacrifice. Covenant love is unconquerable. To live by the covenant means setting your mind on God. It is the way to freedom, self-fulfilment and joyful thanksgiving. Then follows a collection of sayings about the nature of discipleship. The nature of Christ's Messiahship has implications for his disciples. Jesus uses the title 'Son of Man' to refer to himself (v. 31). According to Mark, this is his favoured title. 'Son of Man' need not refer exclusively to Jesus but suggests this is

inclusive of every man and woman. Jesus may have used it to emphasise his life as archetype of a new humanity that would come from the new covenant. While his life, death and resurrection were unique, we are all called to die and rise many times through our discipleship.

God initiates the covenant, but expects his people to respond. Those who really were prepared to take up their cross in following Jesus have sustained the life of the Church (the community of Jesus' promise) over the centuries. We can only begin to imagine how powerful our witness might be if more of us were prepared to do the same. God forbid that we should be a generation of believers of whom Christ would one day be ashamed.

Service Times and Venues

Thursdays 10:30am BCP communion at St Gregory's

	<i>Morning Services - St Gregory's, Bedale</i>	<i>Morning Services - St Mary's, St John's and Burrill</i>	<i>16:00—Evensong conference call</i>
25th Feb	9:15am St Gregory's #F	9 am Burrill Church # 10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	St John's, Leeming
3rd March	8:00am St Gregory's #	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	St Gregory's, Bedale
	9:15am St Gregory's #F	11am St John's, Leeming #	
10th March	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	Burrill

Communion F Facebook



This week's floodlighting is in memory of

Eric, Elsie and Mandy Billings

Alan Isbister

Eric Mosley

To sponsor the floodlighting in memory of someone then please get in touch with Sarah in the office on 07949 006681 or admin@bedale.church



The World Day of Prayer 2024 will be held on Friday 1 March 2024, at Bedale and District Methodist Church, starting at 2pm and followed by refreshments.

A Service for Everyone! "I beg you, bear with one another in love".
Informed Prayer, Prayerful Action.