

IV LENT 2010
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
GALATIANS 4.21 ST. JOHN 6.1

X

Saint Paul is perplexed. "Why are you acting this way", he asks. The people in the Galatian Church were taking sides. Some said in order to become a Christian one had to first become a Jew. The Gentile Christians didn't think that was a very good idea.

"Lighten up", said Paul. "Don't you realize how badly you're behaving? Don't you remember that Jesus has set us all free from sin and death? You talk about the Law, well pay attention to what it really says."

The point of today's Epistle reading is that God always keeps his promises. Saint Paul tells the Galatians if they really understood this, they would see how their behavior was hurting their relationship to God and each other. They needed to "lighten up". God promised he would set everyone right with himself through his Son, Jesus. Everyone! Not just one group of people. God keeps his promises.

God kept his promise when he sent three angels to tell Abraham his wife Sarah was going to have a baby. Sarah thought that was a very funny idea and burst out laughing. But God made a covenant with Abraham, and a covenant is a promise that can't be broken.

"Mothering Sunday" is one special Anglican name for the Fourth Sunday in Lent. Today is about God's promise to us too. The place we learn about God's promise to free us from sin and death is in Church. Saint Paul calls the Church "the present city of Jerusalem".

Just before a man is ordained a priest, the bishop reads a long exhortation. He tells the priest he is to "teach, and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ forever."

It's the job of the Church, "the present city of Jerusalem", to point the way to what Paul calls "the heavenly Jerusalem, our true mother." Jesus tells us that he came so we might enjoy life to the fullest now and he promised one day we will join him in heaven. As we move toward Passiontide we will focus our attention toward the Cross and Good Friday. God's promise to put us right with himself and set us free from sin and death will play itself out with the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus.

Another special Anglican name for today is "Refreshment Sunday", a name it gets from the Gospel. Jesus knew the people who were following him around were hungry. He provided food for a huge crowd of people from two tiny fish and five loaves of bread. Jesus knows food is part of what we need to enjoy life now. When he was tempted in the desert he trusted God to provide what he needed. He asks us to trust God to provide the things we need. The crowd in today's Gospel went home full and refreshed after a good meal. We get spiritually refreshed every time we hear God's Word and receive Holy Communion.

There is one final special name for today, "Rose Sunday". The Anglican Catholic Church follows the long tradition of not having flowers at the Altar during Lent. This is about the half-way point in our Lenten journey. We pause briefly to "lighten" things up a bit, so today you see pink roses at the Altar.

Mothers take care of their children and help them do the right thing. We leave here today refreshed by the Body and Blood of Jesus, knowing that the Church, our Mother, is taking care of us and nurturing us through Word and Sacrament, and preparing us for the day we will see God face-to-face in heaven.

Jesus promises those who believe in him will one day be with him in heaven. God always keeps his promises. Isn't that a good reason to "lighten up"!

X