

**Lectionary readings: Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22: 23-31; Romans 4: 13-25; Mark 8: 31-38 (Second Sunday in Lent)**

**For reflection and prayer**

- **Genesis 17:** Abraham was asked to go forward in faith, faith in a God who is trustworthy. It was to be a long time before God's promises would be fulfilled. How willing are we to wait on God, to *'live entirely before God'* ? (v1 The Message) This suggests to me openness, closeness, bringing God into the whole of life, being aware of His presence, even when God seems absent. Abraham went on trusting in God despite the fact that he and Sarah must often have doubted. Let's be honest about our doubts and share these with God, but all the while know that our God can be trusted and works in ways far beyond our understanding.
- **Psalm 22:** This Psalm starts with the words Jesus uttered on the cross: *' God, why have You left me? Why are You so far from me? I can no longer feel You near. I reach desperately for You, but I cannot find You.'* (v1-2 Psalms Now) But v 23-31 speak of praise, for we worship a God who will never desert us. He is not a God who favours the few; He is the God of the whole earth. We are all precious to Him. We are on a journey that includes pain and sorrow and darkness, as well as joy and light. Do we praise God only when things are going well? Or are we able to go forward in faith despite the darkness of uncertainty and suffering? *'Our children will hear about the wonders of the Lord.'* (v30) How will they hear if we don't share these wonders with

them? Let's share God's love with people around us this week.

- **Romans 4:** Just as Abraham was not blessed by God as a reward for what he had done, neither are we. All is of grace. God's promises to us spring from His unconditional love for us. v16 The Message: *'The fulfilment of God's promise depends entirely on trusting God and his way, and then simply embracing him and what he does.'* Let's embrace God and know that God embraces us in our apparently hopeless or impossible situations. Lent is a time for reflecting on where God is and taking little steps to learn how to trust God more.
- **Mark 8:** How like Peter we are - seeing things from a purely human point of view, failing to see God in our lives. Jesus encourages us to embrace whatever suffering comes to us and find God with us in it. He says that self-sacrifice is the way to become our true self - letting go of the ego, and setting our hearts on God and His desires for us. That's the way to inner freedom, fullness of life. So Lent is a time to face up to the little 'deaths' that we are invited to die each day - death to selfishness, to fear, to anxiety, to guilt - so that we rise to a new way of living, walking through life with the One who loves us dearly and clinging to Him.

**For reflection**

'Will you come and follow me if I but call your name? Will you go where you don't know and never be the same? Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known? Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me? ....Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name? ....Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name? ....In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show. Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.' (CH4 Hymn 533)