

[send this](#)[bookmark](#)[print](#)[close](#)

The Parish Paper

OF
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Vol.40 No.14

The First Sunday in Lent

03/01/09

THE LOGIC OF LENT (1)

The Church's preparation for Easter falls into three phases, each of them three Sundays. In the first phase, in the three Sundays before Lent, we began our pilgrimage to Easter ("Behold, we go up to Jerusalem"), portrayed in the lessons as a time of disciplined effort and cultivation of God's word, a journey of undaunted hope to the city of God, into union with the true and eternal good, which is known by faith, and is steadfastly willed with the love called charity.

In the second phase of our pilgrimage to Easter, on the first three Sundays in Lent, the lessons teach us that this pilgrimage up to Jerusalem involves conflict with diabolical illusions and lies, from whose perverting power we can only be set free by the truth of the Word of God. Those like Abraham who are called by God must expect to find their fidelity to this calling tested, as Abraham's was by the command to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18). We learn that adherence to the Creator is the condition of rightly holding all created goods.

The "temptation" (testing) of Abraham foreshadows Christ's temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Fresh from his baptism, wherein he was manifest as Son of God, Christ proves his Sonship in victory over the three-fold temptations of the flesh, the world, and the devil.

In the epistle (2 Corinthians 6:1-10, a magnificently exalted passage) Saint Paul urges us to show that we have not "received the grace of God in vain" – the grace of divine sonship, given us in Christ – "but in all things approving ourselves as the servants of God", in every kind of test and trial of faithfulness. These tests include the endurance of bodily affliction: "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities ... in fastings". We can prevail in these tests and trials only by the gifts and graces given by God: "by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God". Such is the "armour of righteousness" whereby we may prevail in the spiritual warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The lesson concludes with a wonderfully paradoxical picture of the Christian victorious in his trials – "as dying, and behold, we live" – dead, and risen, in Christ.

This teaching of the epistle lesson is appropriately applied in the collect's prayer for us "to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever" –as true servants, in true sonship

- "obey [the Lord's] motions in righteousness, and true holiness".

The Rev'd Gavin G. Dunbar

send this

bookmark

print

close

[Report Errors](#) | [Comments](#)

Copyright 2003 - 2004 St. John's Episcopal Church in Savannah, GA. All rights reserved.