

The Father of Our Faith

by Linda Rex

March 5, 2023, 2nd Sunday in Preparation for Easter or Lent—During my studies with Grace Communion Seminary I have learned about the different times in history when God by the Spirit brought about a spiritual awakening which led to the transformation and renewal of communities and churches. Many people here in America have been asking God for such a spiritual awakening, and have been encouraged and comforted by the recent movement of the Holy Spirit at Asbury University.

We are reminded anew that the beauty of God’s creative spiritual work in human hearts and lives does not come about by human effort and striving. Spiritual renewal and transformation is something only God can do, and is something that he chooses to do and orchestrates, not because we get everything exactly right and because we deserve it, but simply due to God’s love for us, and his desire to restore, reconcile, and renew us.

In the gospel reading for this Sunday, John 3:1–17, Jesus tells the Pharisee Nicodemus that the only way a person can see or participate in the kingdom of God is if they are born from above. Then he begins to describe how the Spirit moves in unseen and unbidden ways that can only be recognized by their resulting effect on those who have been touched by the divine wind. Our part in this whole process is trust, allowing God to be who he is in every situation, placing ourselves fully at his disposal, allowing him to be who he is as our Savior, Healer, and Redeemer.

The kingdom of God, as the reign of our sovereign King in our hearts and lives, is real and active even today, and we participate in God’s kingdom right now as we yield to and obey the Spirit, following Jesus as he leads us to do our Father’s will. We are reminded that Jesus’ attention was often drawn to the widow’s small gift, the thief’s last cry on the cross, the tax collectors and sinners who didn’t deserve any attention at all. We fall in love with God when we experience the profound reality of his love for us, and his love fills our hearts as the Spirit pours into us, enabling us to know and be assured that, yes, indeed, we are God’s beloved children.

In the New Testament passage for this Sunday, Romans 4:13–17, the apostle Paul takes this even further as he shows that God is the true Source, the Father of all, from whom we receive grace and salvation by faith. Abraham and Sarah were beyond the ability to have children when God promised them a son—and he kept his promise to them. And this son, Isaac, was a descendant through whom our Savior, Jesus Christ, came. Our God calls as real and substantial those things which do not yet exist, and in the speaking of his Word, they become real and substantial.

In the same way, God has called everyone of us his very own, the promised descendants of Abraham millennia ago—and here we are, children of the Father, through Jesus Christ his Son, by his heavenly Spirit. Abraham, our forefather, “the father of us all,” is a reflection or picture of our divine Father, the One who made us and sustains us all—the same Father, who, even when we fell captive to evil sin, and death, drew us all to himself, bringing us back into right relationship with himself, giving us his righteousness, through his Son Jesus. The Spirit calls us even today to embrace this true reality by faith, and to experience the wonder of it through prayer, contemplation, and worship. The Spirit reminds us to place our faith in Jesus Christ, who laid everything down so we could know our Father’s embrace in the fellowship of the Spirit, now and forever, as his beloved children.

Father, thank you for loving us so very much. Thank you, Jesus, for bringing us back home to the Father, to be held in his loving embrace. Thank you, heavenly Spirit, for enabling us to experience and know God’s love. Show us even now how much we are loved and cared for, through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

“What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to Him as righteousness.’ Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation. For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, ‘a father of many nations have I made you’) in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.” Romans 4:13–17 NASB