

## Bible Challenge - February 15 - 21, 2016

### INTRODUCTION

*Though we sometimes doubt and often resist God's desire to protect and save us, our God persists. In holy baptism, God's people have been called and gathered into a God-initiated relationship that will endure. Lent provides the church with a time and a tradition in which to seek the face of the Lord again. Lent provides another occasion to behold the God of our salvation in the face of the Blessed One who "comes in the name of the Lord."*

### FIRST READING: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

*God promises a childless and doubting Abram that he will have a son, that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars, and that the land of Canaan will be their inheritance. Abram's trust in God is sealed with a covenant-making ceremony, a sign of God's promise.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Genesis 15. (If you have time, include Genesis 14:14-24 to read two more stories about oaths and blessings.)

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Research a word or name you would like to know more about.

*Option B.* Research *covenant between parts* or *Abrahamic covenant* to learn more about the importance of covenants in the Bible and the interesting covenant ceremony described in this reading.

*Option C.* The story of Abraham is rich and complex. Read Genesis 11:26 – 25:11 as a Lenten opportunity to renew this fascinating story of a very human father of our faith.

### PSALM: Psalm 27

*In the day of trouble, God will give me shelter. (Ps. 27:5)*

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 27.

**Explorer Challenge:** Identify the different kinds of statements in Psalm 27. Some are about the future; some about the present; some are requests, some promises; some seem very confident, some less so; some are spoken to the Lord, others not. Do you see patterns? In verse 1, is the psalmist confidently asking or actually questioning who (or what) he should fear?

### SECOND READING: Philippians 3:17-4:1

*Although Paul's devotion to Christ has caused him to be persecuted, he does not regret the course he has taken. Writing from prison, he expresses confidence in a glorious future and encourages other Christians to follow in his footsteps.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Philippians 3 – 4:1.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Read an introduction to Philippians to learn who Paul is calling “enemies of the cross.” What were they doing and why was it a problem?

*Option B.* Philippians is short; read the whole epistle to gain a wider context for today’s reading.

### GOSPEL: Luke 13:31-35

*Neither Herod's plotting nor Jerusalem's resistance to maternal love will deter Jesus from his sacrificial mission.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Luke 13.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* If you are surprised that some Pharisees might come to warn Jesus, research the Pharisees, their relation to Jesus, or their depiction in the New Testament.

*Option B.* Use a reference Bible, concordance, or the internet, to research the phrase “it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside Jerusalem.”

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of the covenant, in the mystery of the cross you promise everlasting life to the world. Gather all peoples into your arms, and shelter us with your mercy, that we may rejoice in the life we share in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

The Son of Man must be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. (*John 3:14-15*)