From Wilderness to Resurrection Hope

Lent 2: The Salvation We Are Offered

Readings: Genesis 12.1-4a, Romans 4.1-5, 13–17, John 3.1–17a

As I stand here in Jerusalem this ancient, fractured, beautiful city, I'm reminded that salvation is always grounded in real places, real stories, and real lives. Scripture doesn't offer us an escape from the world; it offers God's presence within it. It offers hope precisely where the ground feels contested, fragile, or weary.

Today's readings give us three windows into that hope: Abraham setting out into the unknown, Paul reflecting on grace, and Nicodemus coming to Jesus by night. Together they show us what the salvation we are offered truly looks like.

Genesis 12 begins with a God who speaks into a settled life and says, "Go… to the land that I will show you." Abram is asked to step away from certainty into trust. God doesn't give him a map, only a promise.

And the promise is breathtaking: "I will bless you… and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Salvation, from the very beginning, is expansive. It is never confined to one tribe or one moment. It is blessing meant to overflow.

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In Romans 4, Paul reminds the early church that Abraham's trust in God came before any law, any religious structure, any system of worthiness. Abraham simply trusted and God counted that trust as righteousness.

Paul insists that salvation is not payment for good behaviour. It is not a spiritual reward scheme. It is grace, a pure gift. And that is still good news for us. In a world where people are constantly measured, evaluated, and compared, Paul reminds us that we do not have to earn the love of God. We never did. Salvation comes to us as promise, as mercy, as sheer unmerited grace.

Here in Jerusalem, a place where identities, histories, and hopes overlap, blend and clash, Paul's message feels especially vital. God's gift is for all. The promise is wide enough, generous enough, merciful enough to hold the entire human family.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night, carrying questions he can no longer ignore. And Jesus meets him gently, offering not condemnation but an invitation:

"No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

This invitation is about new birth, a new way of seeing, a whole new way of life!

continued

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Lent 2: The Salvation We Are Offered (continued)



Supporting Embrace is not charity in the thin sense of the word. It is participation in God's own mission of healing. It is choosing to stand alongside those who daily transform hard places into signs of hope.

Not through our striving, but through the Spirit who blows where she chooses.

Nicodemus struggles to understand, and Jesus doesn't push him away. Instead Jesus reveals the deepest truth of God's heart:

"For God so loved the world…"

"God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save it."

This is the salvation we are offered; love, not condemnation; renewal, not despair; a future, not a dead end; a widened imagination for what God can yet do.

Here in this city, so full of longing, suffering, and resilience, the question is not only what salvation is, but what salvation asks of us. If God's salvation is blessing for all families of the earth. If God's salvation is gift, not achievement. If God's salvation meets us in our questions and leads us into new birth. Then salvation cannot be something we only receive. It must also be something we embody.

That is why organisations like Embrace the Middle East matter so deeply. Our work with Christian partners in healthcare, education, trauma support, community development, disability inclusion, and peace-making, makes visible the mercy God longs for the world. Supporting Embrace is not charity in the thin sense of the word. It is participation in God's own mission of healing. It is choosing to stand alongside those who daily transform hard places into signs of hope. And in a region where fear, division, and injustice too often dominate the headlines, we who follow Christ are also called to advocate courageously for peace, dignity, and justice for everyone who calls this fractured yet beautiful land home, echoing God's promise that all the families of the earth are held in God's blessing. All are beloved. All deserve to flourish. Salvation is to be lived."

The salvation we are offered is both simple and profound. It's a promise that blesses. A grace that frees. A love that does not condemn and new birth that renews the world one heart at a time. Abraham stepped into that promise. Nicodemus leaned toward that light and Paul proclaimed it to the ends of the earth.

And here, in Jerusalem, we dare to believe that this salvation still unfolds through us, in us, and sometimes despite us, as God continues to lead us from wilderness into resurrection hope.