

# LECTIONARY REFLECTIONS PROPER 6, YEAR A

## The Rt. Rev. Susan B. Haynes

**Genesis 18:1-15 (21:1-7)[Track 1]**

**Psalm 116:1, 10-17**

**Exodus 19:2-8a [Track 2]**

**Psalm 100**

**Romans 5:1-8**

**Matthew 9:35-10:8, (9-23)**

**Genesis 18:1-15 (21:1-7)[Track 1]**

The theme of promise continues for Abraham (after his call to leave his country, his father's house and kindred to go to a new land). The LORD appears to him by the "oaks of Mamre" which were probably a well-known landmark in that day. The appearance of God is in the form of three men who happen upon Abraham as he is resting in the hottest part of the day. Notice the sense of urgency with which Abraham attempts to compel the three strangers to accept his hospitality. Offering hospitality, even to strangers, was required; and Abraham would have been seriously violating a code of conduct not to offer it. Fortunately the three men accept, and in the course of receiving Abraham's hospitality, they extend the promise of God to him and his wife Sarah that they will have a son. Sarah, who has been barren, laughs at this idea and is upbraided by the messengers for doing so. Embarrassed, she attempts to deny her behavior but they hold her accountable. Nevertheless, the promise is realized with the birth of Isaac, whose name means laughter. Sarah's desolate barrenness becomes a fruitful source of joy and laughter in her old age.

***Sometimes waiting for the promise of God requires us to walk through periods of barren desolation. When the promise is finally realized, joy can bubble up as laughter. Can you think of a time in your life when you received a grace from God, and laughter was your unbidden response?***

**Exodus 19:2-8a [Track 2]**

There is an interesting transition for the people of Israel in this reading that often goes unnoticed. While the people are journeying through Rephidim and the beginning of the wilderness of Sinai, they are referred to as "the people of Israel." However, when they come to camp in front of Sinai, they are called simply "Israel." There in front of the mountain, God sets these people apart for holiness and gives them the name Israel. He establishes a covenant with them and stresses that they are a treasured possession and a holy nation. In exchange for being God's holy people, Israel must keep the covenant. Israel agrees to do so.

***Sometimes it takes a bit of wandering in the spiritual journey before we completely realize our identity as a beloved child of God. Can you remember when that identity became clear to you and something shifted? In exchange for being God's beloved, how do you keep your promises to God?***

**Romans 5:1-18**

In this well-known Pauline passage, the hope of sharing in the glory of God shows up right alongside the idea of suffering. And in fact, suffering is thought of as something to be worn almost like a badge of honor – to be boasted in. Suffering becomes the pathway to hope, passing first through endurance and then character. And this kind of hope is available to all, especially the weak and the marginalized. Because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the gift at Pentecost, Christians bear a hope that never disappoints.

***What hopes do you have for your life in Christ? How long have you waited? Do you feel as if that waiting has changed you for the better?***

### **Matthew 9:35-10:8 (9-23)**

Two themes that appear side by side in this rich (but rather long) Gospel selection are the themes of authority and reliance on God. And in fact, it would appear that any authority we bear for the sake of Christ, we receive only insofar as we rely on God. Jesus has compassion for the crowds he beholds in his journeys, so he teaches them, heals them, and feeds them. He does this with authority and gives to his disciples the same authority. This narrative is interrupted briefly so the author of the Gospel can list the names of the disciples. They are ordinary men, everyday ordinary men. They are no different from anyone else except that they are **called** by God for extraordinary purposes. The only way they can accomplish those purposes is if they rely solely on God for their authority. Jesus underscores this vocation to trust only in God by counseling the disciples to travel lightly – not to worry about their provisions but to expect that anything they need will be given. He also counsels them to go only to the House of Israel and not yet to Gentiles or Samaritans. I think we can understand this as a sort of “first socks, then shoes” directive...that intended first things are being accomplished first and will be followed by other things. Notice the theme of hospitality in this reading as well. Christ is counseling his disciples to expect hospitality but that if they do not receive it, they are not to linger, but to move on. Jesus adds that it will not bode well for those who don’t respond hospitably, comparing them to the cursed Sodom and Gomorrah. With the hospitality that Abraham offers in our Track 1 Genesis reading, there comes promise and hope. With the failed hospitality in towns in the Gospel, comes no peace and in fact destruction.

***Is it possible that God could be calling you, an ordinary person for extraordinary purposes? Do you believe that you have the authority of Christ by virtue of your Baptism? How faithfully are you able to rely on God for your journey through your life in Christ?***