

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

2nd Sunday of Lent | For Sunday, March 17th, 2019

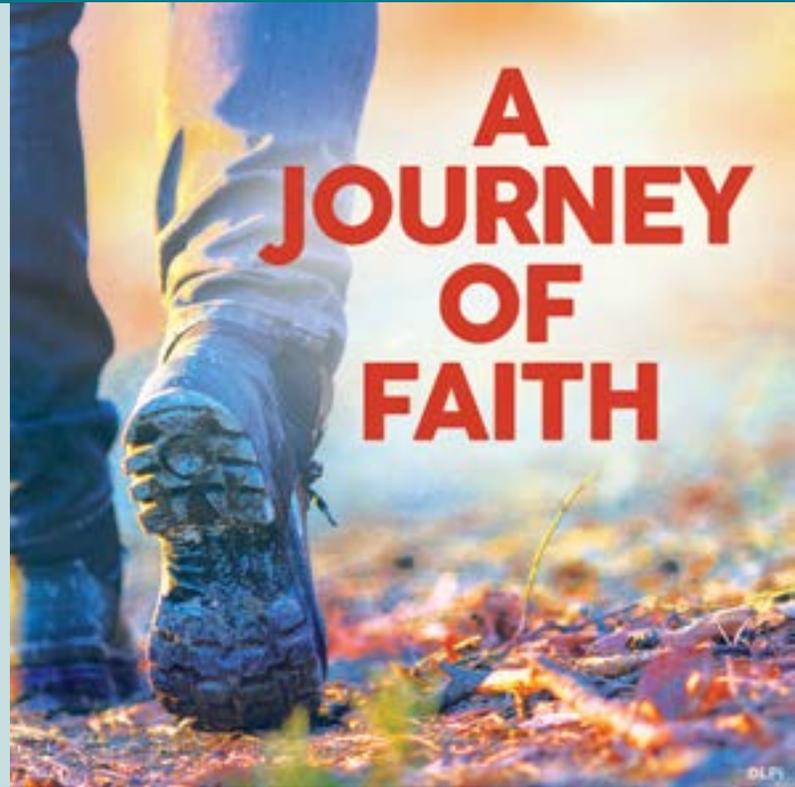
Glory & Sacrifice

Written by Anna Carter

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

Philippians 3:17—4:1

Luke 9:28b-36



Our contemporary American culture has a complicated relationship with sacrifice. Historically, our nation was built on it. Today we honor veterans, first responders, and others who risk their own lives for others. The concepts of taking gambles and working hard endure in the popular imagination. An entrepreneurial culture of gambling innovation is embraced by [mainstream sporting and media events](#). The recent [Oscar win for best documentary, "Free Solo,"](#) shares the story of an elite climber who ascends walls of sheer granite without ropes.

On the other hand, we also demand convenience. Beyond drive-thrus, microwaves, and two-day free shipping, we're increasingly able to work less for our daily necessities. There are smart devices for [your home](#), [your travels](#), [your sleep cycles](#), even [your pets!](#) Tech experts are positing that even our cities are on track for automation and ease.

The truth is, glory requires sacrifice! Herein lies the spirit of the Lenten season. We participate in the surrender and self-denial of Jesus in the desert — and on the cross — in hopes that we will rise with him on Easter. The upcoming Sunday readings echo these important spiritual realities.

In the first reading, Abraham has not yet fully entered into his covenant with God. God has made His promises to our forefather in faith, but the man still questions how it will come to pass. What happens next is an ancient, mysterious ritual of sacrifice. Literally! Animal sacrifice was common in the ancient world, and God invites Abraham into a ritual he understands.

We don't live in ancient Mesopotamia, nor did the apostle Paul. In the second reading, St. Paul elaborates on the sacrifices of the Christian life. It's still physical and tangible, like Abraham's sacrifice: *"We also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body."* This is the work of grace, but it's manifested and strengthened — or weakened — by our deeds. St. Paul warns the early Christians not to be like those who act on impulse. *"Their god is their stomach,"* he notes. Instead, Christians ought to *"conduct themselves according to the model [they] have in us [the apostles]"* and to *"stand firm in the Lord."*

These commands may seem simple, but the life of a disciple is far from easy! To stand firm in the Lord, to commit to the pursuit of virtue, these require daily decisions of surrender, self-denial, and yes, sacrifice!

What, then, is the fruit of such a commitment? The Gospel reveals it. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain. Their winding journey over dust and stone took time and energy. While it was no doubt an honor to accompany Jesus, an uphill hike requires much more of us than an easy day relaxing at camp! At the top, Moses and Elijah “*appeared in glory*” alongside Jesus as he is transfigured. The light blinds, the clouds part, and the voice of the Father thunders. Glory is revealed!

For now, this glory is still only temporary. Peter’s cry to set tents atop the mountain to honor this transfigured glory is met with silence. The marvelous manifestations eventually fade, and “*Jesus was found alone.*” The apostles speak nothing of what they have seen, and the group will eventually trudge back down the mountain.

This Lenten journey — and our Christian life — is both a juxtaposition and a symbiotic relationship between glory and sacrifice. We fast, we offer funds and volunteer hours, we commit to additional prayers. We feel the strain and pull at our normal life through the out-of-the-ordinary sacrifice. Yet through our gifts and self-denial, we brush something extraordinary. The spark in someone’s eye as we greet them in the soup kitchen line. The peace of an open Bible on a quiet morning. The resolve in our child’s face as their coins clink into the almsgiving jar. Little glories born as fruit of our sacrifices. Here and gone in moments, perhaps, but ready to emerge again should we persevere. This week, commit to your Lenten sacrifices with renewed resolve. Up and down the mountain we go!

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PRAYER

*Heavenly Father,
I thank you for naming me Your beloved child,
and for inviting me into a journey of life and love with Your Son.
Jesus, I remember your many sacrifices.
You offered your life to proclaim, teach, and heal,
culminating in your gift of self on the cross.
Help me to sacrifice this Lenten season.
May I draw near to you in prayer,
Unite with those who suffer as I fast,
And serve in the alms I give.
Fill all Christians with Your Holy Spirit,
giving us the grace to persevere
in our commitment to follow You,
to sacrifice with You,
and so to rise with You into glory.
Amen.*