

Year A Second Sunday in Lent March 5 2023

Promise is a Latin word = Pro – go forward and Miss - Mission - sent

A promise is something sent forward into the future.

Listen to what God's sent forth into Abraham's future:

"I promise to make you into a great nation...

I will make your name great.

You will be a blessing to others.

I will bless those who bless you.

I will put a curse on anyone who puts a curse on you.

All nations on earth

will be blessed because of you."

All that is sent into Abraham's future by a single promise. It is what he lives for – it is what he trusts.

Promises are serious even in a kid's world: **"Cross my heart and hope to die - Stick a needle in my eye,"**

Making and keeping promises is serious stuff.

Stick a needle in your eye – that's nothing, listen to what God says if he breaks a promise.

God said to Abraham: *"Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, and a dove, and a young pigeon."* Then: *"Cut these animals in half and lay them out each half opposite the other half"*

Then the crows tried to eat the carcasses, but Abraham chased them away. That night a blazing, smoking fire-pot appeared and passed through the middle of the carcasses. God is saying I will be cut in half and eaten by crows if I do not keep the promise I made to you today. "Poke a needle in your eye"! – Seems like nothing!

We experience so many empty and broken promises that we can switch off when we hear genuine promises.

This product promises to make your clothes cleaner and smell nicer than any other product.

This product promises to makes your body cleaner and smell nicer than any other product.

This car promises to make you tough, popular, and classy.

Who said:

"I promise that no child will ever live in poverty" Bob Hawk:

"I promise there will never ever be a GST" John Howard 1995

"I promise there will be no Carbon Tax" Julia Gillard 2011

"I promised there will be absolutely no cuts to education and health at all" Tony Abbot 2014

Political promises are like babies: easy to make, hard to deliver.

Can we trust God's promises?

Because God's has fulfilled so many of his promises already he makes his word the truth it is.

It's the promise-maker that makes the promise – it doesn't depend on the receiver.

C S Lewis tells a real story in his biography – a promise he made. He was in the WW1 trenches at the Somme. Lewis is wounded – his mate is mortally wounded. Before his mate died Lewis made a promise. He promised his mate that he would look after this mate's wife and daughter for the rest of his life.

Sound almost Hollywood, doesn't it? Here is the twist – as he was looking after her they fell in love and got married. No just kidding! His mate's wife turns out to be absolutely awful – he writes that she was rude, obnoxious, ungrateful, arrogant, and domineering. But Lewis still looked after her and provided for her.

He never used her arrogance as an excuse to break his promise. And there is the heart of a promise.

It's the promise-maker that makes the promise – it doesn't depend on the receiver.

A promise depends on the promise maker.

God the promise maker promises Abraham's offspring to be a blessing – to be holy. To fulfil this promise - God needed to provide us with a saviour – to take our sins away and make us holy, Blessed. With-out a saviour we would be nothing – certainly not holy - God promised Holiness through Jesus.

The angel promised Joseph that a child will be born and this child will "*save his people from their sins, [making us holy]*" (Matt 1:21).

You see If our greatest need was for information, God would have sent us google a long time ago.

If our greatest need was for technology, God would have sent Mark Oliphant a long time ago.

If our greatest need was for pleasure, God would have sent us someone like Adelle a long time ago.

If our greatest need was for money, God would have sent us a Ross Greenwood a long time ago.

Our greatest need is for forgiveness...

God sent promised a Saviour from the beginning and he sent us Jesus "he saves" 2000 years ago."

Promise made – promise kept`

We are looking down the barrel of Easter.

- When Jesus died on Good Friday, God made a promise that Jesus' life will pay for all of our sins.
- When Jesus rose again from the dead, God promised us eternal life.
- He has promised that he will be our helper and strength through all the ups and downs of life –
- He promises *Immanuel* which means "God with us".
- In our baptism he promised that he would be our heavenly Father, and we will always be his children.

When God makes a promise he keeps it. A promise is something not here yet, but has the power to completely change the way we deal with the "now." As Luther said, "**if I knew I was going to die tomorrow I would plant an apple tree today**". He does something today – because of the promises of tomorrow.

We can do something today because of the future we know. Why hold onto rubbish, and strive, hatred, and greed today – when God has a future for us.

Today I am just reminding us of what a promise is and what God's promises are. Especially 4 promises.

- To Abraham – you will be the Father of a holy nation.
- Christmas – a saviour will be born
- Easter - "*all who live and believe in Jesus will never die but have eternal life.*"
- And Baptism – You are a holy child of God – full of the Holy Spirit made to be in God's image, born again to live a full life in his name.

A promise is a powerful thing, it doesn't always solve our immediate problems, but it inspires us to hang in their knowing good will eventually come. What a life Abraham lived because he trusted God's promises.

"Abraham take a knife and sacrifice your only son on the mountain". Abraham was to be the father of a great nation – Isaac was their only son – their only means of producing this great nation – sacrifice him Abraham! And he did to the point of raising the knife – then a ram appeared tangled by his horns.

Isaac was not killed the promises was kept. Talk about down to the wire.

We can %100 rely on God's promise. Easter is around the corner – our means of becoming Holy and blessed is on the cross – It is the fulfillment of Abrahams promise – can we give thanks?

My little dogs, happy little dogs who absolutely knows there the promise of love, and food, and shelter, instore for them. They will do anything for me – they live in hope because they know there is only goodness instore for them – is it going to be a walk, a bone, a pat – who cares – there is something good promised for me.

The poor little dogs I've seen in communities, no hair, starving. They know there is nothing promised for them do – they have no hope – they look down – they die. Every time we eat and drink from this table, we are receiving the promises of God – we have hope.

Are we worried that there is no hope after today's meeting or are we excited there will be, more hope, more opportunities.

From Luke (12), Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. [It's his promise to you]

: **"though the mountains be shaken, and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant removed," says the LORD. (Isaiah 54:10)**

Remember CS Lewis the integrity of promise is in the promise maker.

The joy and newness of life is in the receiver.

Amen.

Lord help us to trust and receive your promises in faith.

Let us live, breath, and be you church into he future because you promised to bless us always. Amen.

Help us see your promise played out this Easter. Amen.

Prayer.

Father lead us with one spirit and one heart to trust your every promise.

Lead us to the cross and see how it was that we are made holy and right to do good in your kingdom.

We pray that you equip and empower us to live the life you have intended for us – your holy people.

Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer.

We pray for peace in places where there is war and unrest.

We stand with love and support along all those who serve this country in the defense forces.

We stand with all who have lost loved ones in through war or human trouble.

Watch over those who work to offer comfort and hope in times of need – our emergency services, our medical people, our police and government – our aged care workers.

Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer.

Father, we pray for your church that it remains forever. We pray for this church – that is each and every one who come to your words and sacrament – we pray that we are blessed so that we can be a blessing to others around here./

Help us be good stewards of your gifts so that no one goes hungry, or thirsty, or without shelter.

Provide for us leaders at all levels who listen to you and your people for direction.

Bless all industry and commerce especially bless those employ and help others.

Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer.

Be with those who are grieving, comfort them with your promise of eternal life.

Be with all who are anxious about the future – calm them with your promise of being with us to the end of time.

Be with all who are lonely and hungry and those without a voice in this land – promise to hear them and bless them.

Bless our visitors as they are a blessing to us. Let them hear that they are loved while they are away from home

We thank you for every thing we find and mine, for what we grow and catch, for what we earn, for pensions and all that we have.

Matthew 5:33-37

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

³³ 'Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord." ³⁴ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ Let your word be "Yes, Yes" or "No, No"; anything more than this comes from the evil one.