

Lent Day 10

Saturday March 11, 2017

Reading: Romans 4:1-12

Reflection

So often the real message is, do what I say not what I do. This was illustrated strongly to me one evening when I was a teenager. We were gathered in my Dad's bedroom where my brother and I were being spoken to about our bad behaviour. Then, with a cigarette bobbing in his mouth as he exclaimed, my Dad said to me, "You shouldn't be smoking!" He was right of course, a fourteen year old boy shouldn't be smoking. But instead of taking the admonition to heart, we all broke out laughing at the ludicrous scene. What was the message I was actually being given?

Paul has been saying some disquieting things from Israel's point of view, so a natural question is, is this true? Doesn't Scripture tell a different story? What did Abraham experience? Paul picks that up and changes it slightly to demonstrate his case; to show that the action of God and this word of God matches. He asks, "What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?" Who can claim Abraham as father? Those who enter the people by faith in Jesus or those who enter through keeping the letter of the ethnic Law?

Paul then works through Abraham's story to show that Abraham is counted a member of God's people while uncircumcised, that is he was justified by God without the work of the Law called circumcision. So, we who also believe God (confess Jesus as Lord and believe God raised him from the dead) are justified. This shows that Abraham is, in some ways, more forefather of those who believe like him apart from the Law. Although, the ultimate answer is Abraham is father to both circumcised and uncircumcised; Jew and Gentile.

This is good news for our Lenten journey because it reminds us of God's character. He loves and justifies us, in Christ, not because we keep his law. Rather, we keep his law because he loves us and justifies us in Christ. He makes us what we are and then calls us to be what he has made us to be — his children. Lent is remembering and living into that new identity. There is no mixed message from God the father, you can be holy because he has made you holy.

Prayer

Good, good father, thank you for being a father whose actions and words match. You have made us your own and given us all we need for living and being your children. Amen.