

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

February 17, 2008

[] = Instructions for worship planners and worship leaders: delete from the worship folder
() = Information for the congregation: include in the worship folder and/or PowerPoint.

[Note: **Worship Alive Plus!** is designed to be useable/adaptable in planning contemporary, blended and “fresh traditional” worship.]

[Lutheran Lectionary © 2007 WorshipOutlet.com,
by Kelly Ferrari, Julie Koenemann, and Rev. J. Paul Davidson]

WORSHIP THEME: “Promise Kept for Promise Breakers”

Have you ever broken a promise? Tell the truth--none of us are promise keepers. We all have failed others through our failure to match our promises with deeds. But today is not about our being promise-breakers, but to celebrate the Promise Keeper. The Father made a lasting promise to Abraham. Abraham believed the promise that the Messiah would come through his bloodline. The promise was kept, not because of Abraham’s faithfulness, but because of our promise-keeping Father. Today He offers you promises too, and you can also grow as a promise keeper. When you grow in faith, trusting in His promises, you become both a promise fulfilled and a promise keeper, more like Jesus.

+ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS +

[Worship Planners: A Worship CD and/or the praise team can play in the background 10-15 minutes before the service.]

INVOCATION AND INTRODUCTION OF TODAY’S THEME

OPENING PRAYER: [This prayer is offered as an idea]— Lord Jesus, we desire to worship You in Spirit and in Truth. You have told us You are seeking such worshipers. May they be found among us here today! May we take our eyes off ourselves and one another and worship before an audience of One. May our spirits be so connected to Your Spirit that we become one with You in our worship. May our hearts not be divided or distracted, so that we will worship You in Truth! You are our Messiah, Redeemer, Promise-Keeping Savior, and we believe in You with all our hearts! Amen.

TIME OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Pastor: How many times have you said to someone, “Hey, I’ll call you this week” and never called? How many times with good intentions have you said, “If you need anything, let me know, I’ll be glad to help” and then when the call came, you were too busy? These are small promises – but they matter. We need to be as good as our word. Let’s come before our Promise-Keeping God this morning and confess our sins to Him, knowing and believing He is faithful to hear and quick to forgive.

(A time of personal reflection and confession)

People:

Father God, have mercy on us. We have not always worshiped You in Spirit and in truth. Often our hearts have been divided and our minds distracted by the world. As we lay before You our

transgressions, especially all the times we have broken promises and failed to keep our word, please forgive us Lord, and heal us. Help us to worship You wholeheartedly. Only by Your grace can we come into Your presence. We are grateful to serve a Promise-Keeping God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Pastor:

Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith. By His grace and His mercy you are made whole. Amen.

RESPONSE

Lord, Have Mercy

[ATBS 2:21; HMS 16:1305; HMS 18:1452-1453]

Steve Merkel

Jesus I've forgotten The Words that You have spoken
Promises that burned within my heart Have now grown dim
With a doubting heart I follow The paths of earthly wisdom
Forgive me for my unbelief Renew the fire again

Chorus

**Lord have mercy Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy on me Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy Lord have mercy on me**

I have built an altar Where I've worshipped things of man
I have taken journeys That have drawn me far from You
Now I am returning To Your mercies ever flowing
Pardon my transgressions Help me love You again

I have longed to know You And all Your tender mercies
Like a river of forgiveness Ever flowing without end
So I bow my heart before You In the goodness of Your presence
Your grace forever shining Like a beacon in the night

Ending

Lord have mercy Lord have mercy on us
Lord have mercy Lord have mercy on us

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[Traditional Option]:

Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart [ELW 750; LSB 708; LW 413; LBW 325]

TIME OF GREETING

TIME OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP

[choose 2 or 3 of the songs listed below or from elsewhere in this service]

How Great Is Our God

[ATBS 2:23; MSPW 3:117; SD 46:2; WT 7:29;
www.worshiptogether.com]

Chris Tomlin / Ed Cash / Jesse Reeves

The splendor of the King Clothed in majesty
Let all the earth rejoice - all the earth rejoice
He wraps himself in light And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice And trembles at His voice

Chorus

**How great is our God Sing with me How great is our God
And all will see how great How great is our God**

And age to age He stands And time is in His hands
Beginning and the end Beginning and the end
The Godhead three in one Father, Spirit, Son
The Lion and the Lamb The Lion and the Lamb

Ending

Name above all names Worthy of all praise

My heart will sing: How great is our God (repeat)

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We Want To See Jesus Lifted High

[ATBS 1:241; WT 1:73; WT 4:75; MSPW 2:67]

Doug Horley

We want to see Jesus lifted high A banner that flies across this land
That all men might see The truth and know He is the way to heaven

Chorus 1

**We want to see we want to see We want to see Jesus lifted high
We want to see we want to see We want to see Jesus lifted high**

Ending

Step by step we're moving forward Little by little taking ground
Every prayer a powerful weapon Strongholds come tumbling down
And down and down and down

Chorus 2

**We're gonna see we're gonna see We're gonna see Jesus lifted high
We're gonna see we're gonna see We're gonna see Jesus lifted high**

CCLI Song No. 1033408

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You Are Worthy of My Praise [AKA "You're Worthy of My Praise"]
[BOB 247; ATBS 2:5; HMS 11: 979; SPW 41; WT 2:76; WT 4:79; VS 5:205]

David Ruis

I will worship (I will worship)
With all of my heart (with all of my heart)
I will praise You (I will praise You)
With all of my strength (all my strength)
I will seek You (I will seek You)
All of my days (all of my days)
I will follow (I will follow)

All of Your ways (all Your ways)

Chorus

**I will give You all my worship
I will give You all my praise
You alone I long to worship
You alone are worthy of my praise**

I will bow down (I will bow down)
And hail You as King (and hail You as King)
I will serve You (I will serve You)
Give You everything (everything)
I will lift up (I will lift up)
My eyes to Your throne (my eyes to Your throne)
I will trust You (I will trust You)
Trust You alone (You alone)

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[Traditional Options]:

With the Lord Begin Your Task [LSB 869; LW 483; LBW 444]

Sing Praise to God the Highest Good [CH 97; ELW 871; LBW 542; LW 452; LSB 819]

[Optional: Children's Message and/or Dismissal to Children's Church]

+ WE HEAR GOD'S WORD +

[It is suggested that the introductions be read out loud as well as the Scripture itself]

FIRST READING Genesis 12:1-9 (NIV)

When Yahweh speaks to Abraham and leads him out of the land he lives in and is familiar with, a great adventure begins! The Lord makes some powerful promises to Abraham about his future and the future of many nations that will come from him, and the truly wonderful thing is that Abraham believes God!

¹The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. ²"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." ⁴So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot

went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. ⁵He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. ⁶Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. ⁹Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

SECOND LESSON Romans 4:1-8, 13-17 (NIV)

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul is helping them to understand Abraham's faith. Abraham believed God. The word credited in Romans 4:3 is a Greek word that means "to put to one's account." It is a banking term. When a person works, he earns a salary and this money is put to his account. But Abraham did not work for his salvation; he simply trusted God's Word. It was Jesus Christ who did the work on the cross, and His righteousness was put on Abraham's account.

¹What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ²If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." ⁴Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him....."¹³It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

GOSPEL John 3:1-17 (NIV)

Meeting a Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus offers her living water. She does not understand what He means by this at first, but through the course of their conversation she begins to realize that she is speaking with someone very special. As He tells her about her own life, and explains to her what true worship should be, He reveals Himself as the Messiah of all Israel.

¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." ³In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." ⁴"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" ⁵Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." ⁹"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. ¹⁰"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹¹I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹²I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do

not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

MESSAGE “Promise Kept for Promise Breakers”

[NOTE: See “Sermon Starters & Seasonings” provided at the end of this service]

+ WE RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD +

[NOTE: Optional location for Confession/Absolution, using materials found earlier in this service]

RESPONSE

Unchanging

[WT 5:66; SSA; www.worshiptogether.com]

Chris Tomlin

Great is Your faithfulness Great is Your faithfulness
You never change You never fail O God

True are Your promises True are Your promises
You never change You never fail O God

Chorus

**So we raise up holy hands To praise the Holy One
Who was and is and is to come Yeah we raise up holy hands
To praise the Holy One Who was and is and is to come**

Wide is Your love and grace Wide is Your love and grace
You never change You never fail O God

Ending

You were You are You will always be You were You are You will always be

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Be Glorified

[ATBS 2:104; MSPW3 152; WT 2:4; WT 4:4; www.worshiptogether.com]

Chris Tomlin / Jesse Reeves / Louie Giglio

Chorus

**You set my feet to dancing You set my heart on fire
In the presence of a thousand kings You are my one desire
And I stand before You now With trembling hands lifted high
Be glorified**

Your love has captured me Your grace has set me free
Your life the air I breathe Be glorified in me

Ending

Be glorified in me Be glorified in me
Be glorified in me Be glorified

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[Traditional Options:]

Standing on the Promises [BH 335; CH 410; HFG 69; NBH 335; UMH 374; UMH 374; WC 306]

The Will of God is Always Best [LSB 758; LW 425; TLH 517]

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

[NOTE: The following are contemporary song options for speaking the Apostle's Creed: *Because We Believe* ATBS 119; SPW 6; INTEGRITY 12 **OR** *This Is What I Believe* GB 249 **OR** The Apostles Creed Integrity 8 **OR** you may choose to do the thematic contemporary creed written specially for this service **OR** use the historic Apostles' Creed]

God is real! I can feel Him and I know He is near.
When I feel lonely and discouraged, I can count on Him.
He is close enough to me that I can respond to Him.
He calls me to disciple and to affirm others.

God is love! He sent Jesus to die for me.
I need no other proof of divine compassion.
His constant love for me is strong.
His plan of salvation is perfect.

God cares about me! His Holy Spirit fills my life.
His Spirit touches me and teaches me.
He leads me beside still waters and into unexpected paths.
God is all I need for a creative life!

I belong to God. Our love for each other will last forever.
The best response I can give Him is my surrendered life.
I will put away all things that separate me from the One True God:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

[OR...]

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen

OFFERINGS

[Congregational Song Option at the Offering: Select one of the suggestions from elsewhere in the service that is yet unused]

PRAYERS¹

[Prayer Topic Starters]

- Thanks for:
 - Your faithfulness – You never break a promise!
 - Your Word, that is consistent from Genesis to Revelation!
 - The Living Water You give us, Lord, so that we never go thirsty again.
 - Revealing Yourself to us in our own lives as the Messiah who loved us and gave Himself for us.
- Please give us:
 - Hearts that are wholly committed to You, surrendering our lives to Your Lordship, Jesus.
 - Others in the Body who will walk with us and hold us accountable for promises made.
- Cause us by Your Holy Spirit and Your Word to:
 - Keep our promises and be men and women of our word.
 - Be willing to give up our own time to be present to others in their times of need.
 - Worship You in Spirit and in Truth, with undivided hearts.
- Local congregational and individual concerns

The Lord's Prayer

[Consider having the congregation sing the Lord's Prayer using the Malotte version using one of the lower keys such as B flat.]

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,

¹ Formal language and "perfectly read" prayers are not recommended for contemporary worship. People appreciate the touching sincerity of informal prayer. "Heartfelt" prayer also teaches/models simple prayer language that anyone can use at home, in the car, the office, etc. These "**Prayer Topics Starters**" are offered to help facilitate spontaneity.

but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

[A communion option to insert for churches celebrating the Lord's Supper on this day]

+ The Lord's Supper +

Here our Lord gives to us His own Body and Blood for the forgiveness of all our sins.

WE PREPARE

Pastor: Oh God, who in the fullness of time sent Your only Son to die on the cross for us, now hear our prayer as we come before You with repentant hearts. In Your mercy, Lord, forgive us all our sins, and welcome us to Your table. We are not worthy to come, but it is Your way always to have mercy, and to receive those who would accept Jesus, Your Son, as Lord and Savior of our lives. Thank You for keeping all Your wondrous promises made through our father, Abraham. Amen. For on the night...[words of institution]

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

SHARING OF THE PEACE

Pastor: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

People: **And also with you.**

(Worshippers may turn to one another and share the peace which comes from the Lord with words such as, "God's peace to you.")

DISTRIBUTION SONGS – [choose as many you need]

In Christ Alone

[ATBS 2:42; HMS 20:1594; MSPW 3:138; WT 5:29]

Keith Getty / Stuart Townend

In Christ alone my hope is found He is my light my strength my song
This Cornerstone this solid ground Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love what depths of peace When fears are stilled when strivings cease
My comforter my all in all Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone who took on flesh Fullness of God in helpless Babe
This gift of love and righteousness Scorned by the ones He came to save
'Til on that cross as Jesus died The wrath of God was satisfied
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life no fear in death This is the pow'r of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath Jesus commands my destiny
No pow'r of hell no scheme of man Can ever pluck me from His hand
'Til He returns or calls me home Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand
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I Lift My Eyes Up
[HMS 18:1443; SSA]

Brian Doerksen

I lift my eyes up to the mountains
Where does my help come from
My help comes from You
Maker of heaven creator of the earth
(repeat)

Oh how I need You Lord You are my only hope
You're my only prayer So I will wait for You
To come and rescue me Come and give me life

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[Traditional Options]:

Your Table I Approach [LW 249; LSB 628]

Jesus, I Will Ponder Now [CW 98; ELW 345; LSB 440; LW 109; LBW 115]

COMMON DISMISSAL

BENEDICTION

Pastor:

Praise to our Promise-Keeping God, who loved us and gave His Son to die for us. He is faithful and true! May He keep you this week in His mercy and grace. Amen.

People:

His promises are true. His grace is sufficient.

CLOSING SONG

Your Grace Is Enough

[WT 7:72; SSA; www.spiritandsong.com]

Matt Maher

Chorus

**For Your grace is enough Yeah Your grace is enough
Yeah Your grace is enough Yeah Your grace is enough for me**

Great is Your faithfulness O God of Jacob You wrestle with the sinner's restless heart
You lead me by still waters into mercy Where nothing can keep us apart

Ending

So remember Your people Remember Your children
Remember Your promise O God

Great is Your love and justice God of Jacob You use the weak to lead the strong
You lead us in the song of heaven's vict'ry And all Your people sing along

[Traditional Option]:

The God of Abraham Praise [BH 34; CH 23; ELW 831; HWC 34; H82 401; HFG 332; LSB 798;
LW 450; LBW 544; PH 488; UMH 116]

Musical Notes

Music charts downloadable through:

www.Praisecharts.com

www.Wordmusicnow.com

www.Worshipleaderassistant.com

www.worshiptogether.com

www.musicnotes.com

www.musicnotes.com

www.songselect.com

Chord charts free downloads available at:

www.Iwillworship.com

www.pwarchive.com

Mp3 downloads available through:

www.Songtouch.com

www.Worshiptogether.com

www.Walmart.com

www.Itunes.com

New Songs to consider:

Our God Saves (Recorded on *Paul Baloche's Our God Saves*)

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Lead lines on www.songselect.com and www.praisecharts.com, and church charts on www.Iwillworship.com and www.pwarchive.com.

Keep your eyes on Songselect for this amazing new song:

You Are My God

Adam Cunningham © 2007 High Hurdle Music (Adm. By Fun Attic Music) Over Fork

SSS – SERMON STARTERS & SEASONINGS

The following ideas are merely intended to help get your own creative juices flowing and prepare your heart for God's Spirit to inspire and speak through you.

“Promise Kept for Promise Breakers”

Romans 4:1-17

Have you ever broken a promise? Tell the truth: none of us are promise keepers. We all have failed others through our failure to match our promises with deeds. But, today is not about our being promise breakers, but to celebrate the Promise Keeper. The Father made a lasting promise to Abraham. Abraham believed the promise that the Messiah would come through his bloodline. And the promise was kept not because of Abraham's faithfulness but because of our Promise Keeping Father. Today He offers you promises, too, and you can also grow as a promise keeper. When you grow in faith and trusting in His promises you become both a promise fulfilled and a promise keeper more like Jesus.

Theological Reflections and Practical Applications

4:1 According to the **flesh** means “according to his own labor.” As the next verse indicates, Paul is asking, “Was Abraham justified before God by his works?”

4:2, 3 Paul quotes Gen. 15:6 to prove that **Abraham** was not justified by works. God made a promise to Abraham, and Abraham trusted God to fulfill it. Because of Abraham's faith, God credited Abraham with **righteousness**. In gaining this righteousness from God, Abraham did not obey some law or perform some ritual like circumcision; he simply **believed** God.

4:4 The fact that Abraham was **counted** righteous when he believed is an indication that he did not work to earn it.

4:5 God gives **righteousness** to those who believe (v. 3). The person who **does not work**, who comes to God by faith alone without having performed rituals or followed Jewish laws—that person will be counted righteous. Paul continues to build his case that righteousness is apart from works of the law.

4:6–8 According to Jewish law, a question was settled by two or three witnesses. Paul calls two witnesses from the OT to testify to justification through faith: one from the Law (4:1–5) and one from the Prophets (4:6–8; see also 3:21; Acts 2:29, 30 where David is called a prophet).

4:9, 10 Given the understanding that people can become righteous by faith alone, apart from obeying the Jewish law, the obvious question from Paul's readers is: “Is this righteousness actually available to **the uncircumcised**?” Many of the Jews of Paul's day assumed that blessing from God and forgiveness applied only to those who had been circumcised, the Jews. **Abraham**, however, received righteousness from God before he was circumcised. This fact opens the door to a new understanding of God's grace. It is available to all people, both Jews and Gentiles.

4:11, 12 Abraham is a **father** both of the **uncircumcised** who believe as well as of the circumcised who believe. Circumcision was a **sign** and **seal**. As a *sign*, it pointed to the fact that Abraham possessed righteousness, and as a *seal* it verified that Abraham was righteous. Technically, circumcision was a sign and a seal of the covenant that God gave Abraham for the land. But God would not make a covenant with one who was not righteous. Note that the conditional promise of Gen. 12:1–3 becomes an unconditional covenant in Gen. 15:18. God declared His unconditional covenant with Abraham after declaring him righteous because of his belief (15:6).

4:13 The **promise** to Abraham was not through circumcision (vv. 9–12) nor **through the law** (vv. 13–16), but **through the righteousness of faith**. **Heir of the world** means that Abraham and his **seed**, in particular Christ, will inherit the earth, a promise that will be fulfilled in the kingdom to be established when Christ returns.

4:14 Those who are of the law is not a reference to the Jewish people but to any who depend on the law for their righteousness.

4:15 Transgression means “stepping over.” The law draws the line that should not be crossed.

4:16 Therefore it is of faith: Paul concludes that God’s promises to Abraham were founded on his faith so that it would be acknowledged that salvation was only through **grace**, that is, God’s favor. Since the promise was not based on adherence to any law or the performance of any ritual, such as circumcision, Abraham is the forefather of all who believe.

4:17 Gives life to the dead is a reference to the birth of Isaac from Abraham’s “dead” body and Sarah’s “dead” womb; both were far beyond the age of childbearing (v. 19).²

Quotations

Broken Promises:

“Get me out of this, and I’ll never tell another lie.” “Count on me to stand up for you from now on.” “I’m done with temper tantrums, Lord.” Goodness gracious. If broken promises were lumber, we could build a subdivision. Doesn’t God have ample reason to walk out on us?

But he doesn’t. Why? Because “God is being patient with you” (2 Pet. 3:9).

Max Lucado, A Love Worth Giving: Living in the Overflow of Love

Faithful

Have you ever reneged on a business agreement? Or skipped out on an appointment? Or gone back on your word to a coworker? Or missed a crucial deadline on which everyone was counting? Have you ever broken promises to your spouse or children?

Fortunately we can count on God to keep His commitments. Even though we as humans are frequently faithless, He remains faithful to His word (2 Tim. 2:13).

If we want to develop godly character, then one of our main objectives should be to honor our commitments. Psalm 15 describes a person who is moving closer to God as one who “swears to his own hurt and does not change.” His word is his bond.³

Rain Clouds

Promise is a cloud; fulfillment is the rain.

Arab Proverb

Full Moon

Promises are like the full moon; if they are not kept at once, they diminish day by day.

German Proverb

Baby Promises

Promises are like babies – easy to make and hard to deliver.

Unknown

²Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1999, S. Ro 4:1-17

³Thomas Nelson Publishers: *What Does the Bible Say About-- : The Ultimate A to Z Resource Fully Illustrated*. Nashville, Tenn. : Thomas Nelson, 2001 (Nelson's A to Z Series), S. 320

Faithfulness

Not the maker of plans and promises, but rather the one who offers faithful service in small matters. This is the person who is most likely to achieve what is good and lasting

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Illustrations

Result of Broken Promises

Every day my dad would come home from work and I'd be shooting buckets in the driveway. I would always ask, "Dad, you wanna play some basketball." And his reply was always the same, "Tomorrow." Eventually, I quit asking.

Maxwell Quinn

Sense and Sensibility

In the opening scene from *Sense and Sensibility*, a dying father leaves his inheritance to his son after making the son promise that he will be very generous to his sisters. On the way home from his father's deathbed the son's hard-hearted wife gradually convinces her newly rich husband to keep the vast majority of his inheritance for himself and give his sisters only a token. So much for the promise made to a Father

Hook

In the movie, "Hook," Robin Williams plays Peter Pan, who had left Neverland and had grown up to be a corporate attorney.

He is completely focused on his job, and ends up neglecting his son over and over.

There is a line that he quotes from time to time in the beginning of the movie that sets the stage for the attitude of his son.

When he promises to be at his son's baseball game, he says, "My word is my bond," meaning that if he makes a promise, it can be counted on.

Unfortunately, he doesn't keep his word to his son, and it almost leads to disaster.

Brian La Croix, Sermoncentral.com

Lonesome Dove

Some promises are kept at great cost. Remember *Lonesome Dove*, the book by Larry McMurtry or the TV mini-series a number of years ago? Woodrow Call promised the dying Gus McCrae that he would be buried back in a grove back in Texas, and McCrae died in Montana, and Woodrow Call took the body back through hell and high water to keep his promise.

Maxwell Quinn

On the Lighter Side ☺

Promises are Eggs:

Sometimes we are lured in very easily. Two brothers were getting ready to boil some eggs to color for Easter. "I'll give you a dollar if you let me break three of these on your head," said the older one.

"Promise?" asked the younger. "Promise!" Gleefully, the older boy broke two eggs over his brother's head.

Standing stiff for fear the goey mess would get all over him, the little boy asked, "When is the third egg coming?" "It's not," replied the brother. "That would cost me a dollar."

S. Henriques, Sermoncentral.com

Pastoral Promise

There were these two brothers, members of the same church. They were awful men, the worst sort, but they were the wealthiest men in the town, and in the congregation. So, the pastor always looked the other way when it came to their shenanigans.

Then a new pastor came, right at the time one of the brothers died. The surviving brother came to the new pastor and said, "Bet you'd like a new roof on the church, wouldn't you?" "Sure", said the new pastor. And the brother continued, "And I bet a whole new set of books for your study would be something you'd like." "Absolutely", said the pastor. "Well,", said the brother, "you're doing my brothers funeral. It sure would be nice to hear you call him a saint." "I can do that", said the new pastor. "Promise?" asked the brother. "Promise" said the new pastor.

The day of the funeral came, and the pastor began the eulogy. "This man we have come to bury today was one of the worst, most selfish people alive. He was stingy, selfish, boorish, a scoundrel, filled with anger and hatred. He didn't have one decent bone in his body."

The whole congregation attending the funeral gasped. But then the pastor kept his promise, saying, "But, compared to his brother, sitting here in the front row, he was a saint."

Unknown

Cashing in on a Promise

Ann Landers had an interesting letter in her column. It was from a girl who was writing about her uncle & aunt. She said, "My uncle was the tightest man I've ever known. All his life, every time he got paid he took \$20 out of his paycheck & put it under his mattress.

Then he got sick & was about to die. As he was dying, he said to his wife, "I want you to promise me one thing." "Promise what?" she asked. "I want you to promise me that when I'm dead you'll take my money from under the mattress & put it in my casket so that I can take it all with me."

The girl's letter went on with the story. "He died, & his wife kept her promise. She went in & got all that money the day he died & went to the bank & deposited it, & wrote out a check & put it in his casket."

Melvin Newland, Sermoncentral.com

Video Resources

Promises of God [Intro to Message or in place of Benediction]

An energetic video that graphically lists the promises of God. Short, and to the point. Period! This video is available as a download from www.sermonspice.com. Simply type in the name of the video in the search bar. The video costs \$18 and runs 0:38. This short video can introduce the message, or serve as a reminder of the message by using it as the benediction.

Promises Countdown [Countdown at beginning or during Offerings]

This is a countdown video that highlights the promises of God. This video is available as a download from www.sermonspice.com. Simply type the name of the video in the search bar. The video costs \$12 and runs 5:00. Use the video as a countdown at the beginning of the service, or, in place of an offertory.

NuParable

Covenant

Celebrate the Lord's Supper in the midst of your message. As you speak of God's faithfulness to the covenant, move into the expression of the New Covenant. Move behind the altar as you preach, and consecrate the elements within the context of the message, e.g., "Jesus gave a promise to His disciples, and to you and me. In the same night in which He was...."

Then conclude the message after the Supper, using the grace celebrated in the Supper as empowerment to live as covenant people.

Compromise

The small prefix – com – adulterates the promise. Promise and compromise are, in some ways, opposites. Print the word Promise on a large poster and speak the promises we make in our discipleship. Have someone come and add the word Com, and speak of the ways our discipleship is compromised.

Maxwell Quinn

Audio Resource (MP3 or CD)

“Cat’s in the Cradle” – Example of the Results of Broken Promises [Location Ideas: As a Prelude to the service, during the Offering, or use a 30” cut just prior to or during the sermon. You could also simply print these words in the bulletin or use on PowerPoint and make brief reference to them. Another effective use might be during a prayer time that focuses on the promises that God makes and never breaks in contrast to the lyrics of the song...in that spot, be certain to practice ahead of time with the audio techs to make sure you have the perfect balance between hearing the prayers well above the gentle music in the background.]

“Cat’s in the Cradle” – by Harry Chapin

My child arrived just the other day
He came to the world in the usual way
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay
He learned to walk while I was away
And he was talkin' 'fore I knew it, and as he grew
He'd say "I'm gonna be like you dad
You know I'm gonna be like you"

REFRAIN: And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon

Little boy blue and the man on the moon

When you comin' home dad?

I don't know when, but we'll get together then son

You know we'll have a good time then

My son turned ten just the other day
He said, "Thanks for the ball, Dad, come on let's play
Can you teach me to throw", I said "Not today I got a lot to do", he said, "That's ok"
And he walked away but his smile never dimmed
And said, "I'm gonna be like him, yeah
You know I'm gonna be like him"

REFRAIN:

Well, he came home from college just the other day
So much like a man I just had to say
"Son, I'm proud of you, can you sit for a while?"
He shook his head and said with a smile
"What I'd really like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys
See you later, can I have them please?"

REFRAIN:

I've long since retired, my son's moved away
I called him up just the other day
I said, "I'd like to see you if you don't mind"
He said, "I'd love to, Dad, if I can find the time
You see my new job's a hassle and kids have the flu
But it's sure nice talking to you, Dad
It's been sure nice talking to you"

And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me
He'd grown up just like me
My boy was just like me

REFRAIN: