

**Scripture Lessons for ☪ ☪ the Second Midweek in Advent**

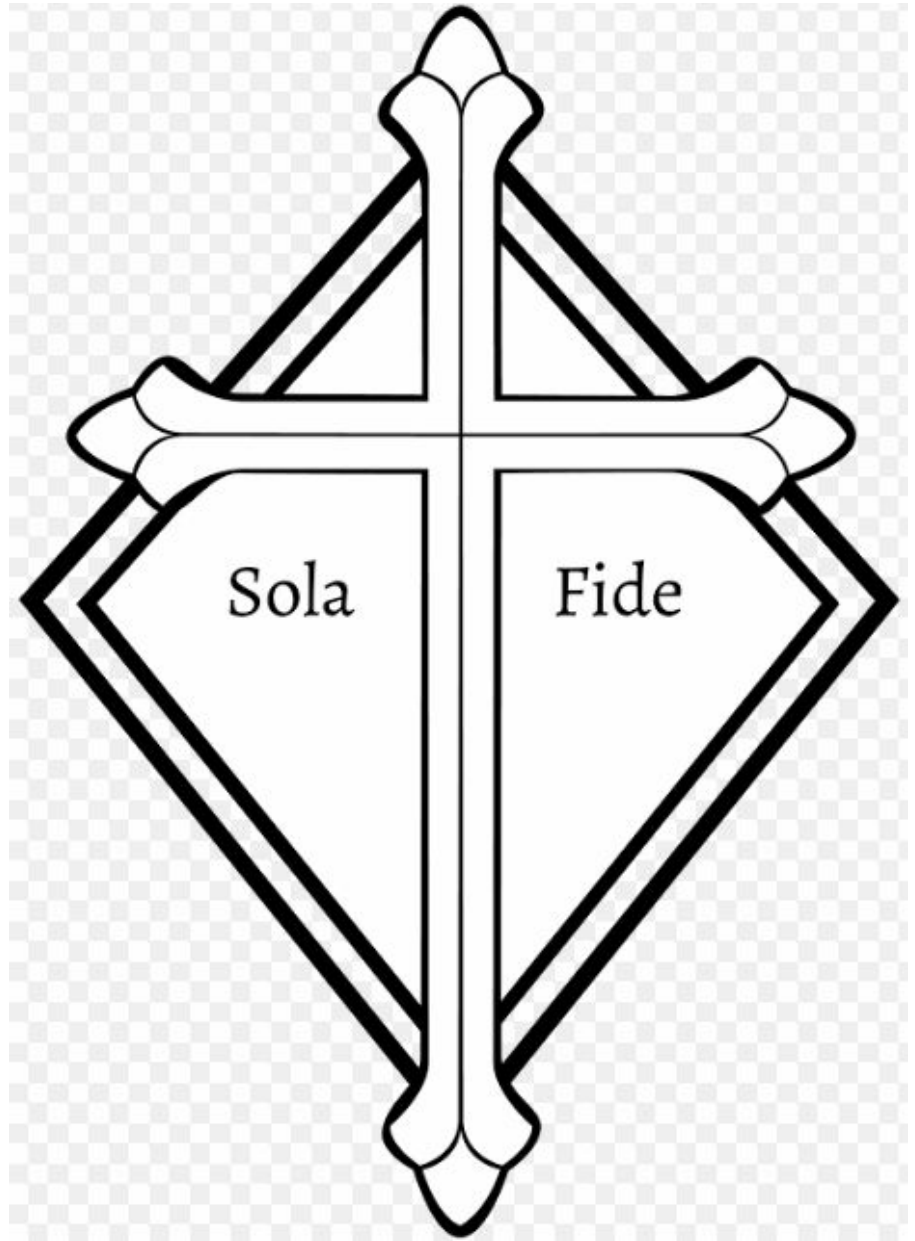
**OLD TESTAMENT Genesis 15:1-6** After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

**EPISTLE Romans 4:1-8** What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

**Gospel**

**John 3:16-21** So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing. And greater works than these will He show Him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father Who sent Him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Our Savior Lutheran Church  Lakeland, FL  ELS  
2<sup>nd</sup> Midweek in Advent ☪ ☪ *Sola Fides – "Faith Alone"*  
*Advent Solas* ✘ December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016, 4:30 pm



*Historic Church Year Symbol Set for Advent-2 Midweek – Faith Alone*

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*Grace to you and Peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus.*

**PRAYER** Everlasting God, Who, by the mouths of Your prophets and saints of old, proclaimed the advent of Your Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Desire of all nations, the Hope of Israel, the Redeemer of the world: Lead us to repent of all our sins, and so to humble ourselves that we may be prepared to receive Him with gladness and to join in singing: Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord! Amen.

**Genesis 15:1-6** After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

"And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness." The word of promise to Abram from the one true God who does not and cannot lie creates the faith necessary to believe it. Abram has no heir except one who is not of his household, yet at the word of God, Abram believes the word.

For many who consider the extraordinary life of Abram and his life after God gives him a new name, Abraham, this act of God's justification seems too simple. Surely this great man of God has something to offer to God to appease his wrath and turn him in favor towards him? But, no. If this were the case, then justification, salvation would not rest on promise, but on a work — even a work that would be good in the eyes of all men. This is not only good news for Abram, but also for us. Here we Christians find ourselves as the heirs of Abraham by faith alone in the promise. For, as God says through **St Paul**, "*the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*" (**Romans 4:23-25**)

**Romans 4:1-8** What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds

are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

God has always only saved men from their sins by declaring them righteous through faith alone. This is God's simple point through Saint Paul. The promise of God given in the Garden through the cursing of the Devil was believed by our first parents, and God counted it to them as righteousness. So it was for Abraham, and so it is for us. So it was for the children of Israel after the giving of the Law, and so it is for us. So it has always been for the Church of God.

Jesus and His apostles consistently set faith alone (*sola fide*) over against works for the salvation of man. One of the clearest places in Holy Scripture is in the fourth chapter of Romans, part of which we meditate on today. Either God is God alone and justifies sinners out of His undeserved favor, or man is God and justifies himself by his work. This is true even if we consider our salvation to be in part by our own works and merit. But we know the blessed truth: we don't even receive the good things of this world by our own worth or merit (see the explanation of the 1st Article of the Apostles' Creed in the Small Catechism), much less our eternal salvation. God's abundant grace is given to us freely for the sake of Christ's merit, not our own, and is received by faith. For this we thank God with happy hearts.

**John 5:19-24** So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

If our trust is placed and comfort found in our works for our standing before God, we will not be found worthy of the last day. But take heart! God has purchased us from sin, death, and the devil, not with gold or silver, but with the mighty works of His Son, even death on a cross. None of this done for His sake, but for our sake. Because of this, life is yours - true life as God intended it. A life so lively that the life of this world will be seen to be death because of the cancer of sin. A life so gloriously free from suffering, pain, and sorrow that it alone can truly be called life. All of this, God the Father gives you for the sake of His Son, in Whom you trust. So, Jesus says, quite to the contrary of our desire to save ourselves, "Whoever hears and believes has eternal life." Amen.

The result of this gift of faith is that the second coming of Christ will be our passing from the death of this life to the life everlasting. No judgment. God has already rendered that in His Son for us: not guilty. Praise be to God!