

A Sermon Preached by

Fr. Ralph Osborne for the Second Sunday of Lent, Year C

February 28, 2010 at [St. Thomas Church](#), Menasha, Wisconsin

[Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18](#) | [Psalm 27](#) | [Philippians 3:17-4:1](#) | [Luke 13:31-35](#)

The pattern of faithfulness.

Even though it's getting a bit old, I like the commercial that has a person running around with a map of the United States over her head. Most of it is colored in red, indicating that her phone gets much better coverage than the guy with the map of the United States above his head that is mostly blank. He can't use his phone in as many places as the woman with the good plan.

There are so many phone companies and plans to choose from. I'm old enough to remember one phone company. The phone company. Now we choose between the types of phones we want. Some people have smart phones, but I have a dumb phone. Then there is the contract. You have to decide about how many minutes of call time, whether you have to make three thousand text messages this month and if you want to pick up and send your email with your phone. Not a small issue is the monthly fee that will need to be paid for the next two years.

We are in the season of Lent and this is the time of year that the people of God's church often renew their contract with God. We make new commitments and promises to the One who loves us so much. You would think that there isn't much variety in communication plans with God. Some people's communication plan with God is the variety that you pay as little as possible up front and from then on, its pay as you go. You know, only use God when you need him. Do you know what the phone plan was called in the Old Testament? It was called The Covenant. It was an agreement with Abraham and then with all his children, God's people. The Covenant was initiated by God. God said, "I am calling you. I promise to be faithful to you. In return, I expect you to be faithful to me. Answer me when I call. I will answer you."

Today our lessons encourage us to look at our faithfulness. Is our connection with God up to date and carrying us through the situations in our lives? Abram had been called by God to leave his country and go to a new and different one. He was also given a promise of children. The promise had not been fulfilled yet, so God gave Abram a ring. I wonder what his ring tone was? Hey Abram! Tsup God? I'm with you, no need to be afraid. But God, I know you are great and all that, but your promise is not panning out. Don't worry Abe, your going to have more children than you can count.

You know what Abram said? He said, “Yes Lord.” He believed. That was righteous. Then God said, all this land will be yours. Abram said what we would have. How can I know? Then they did a bit of strange liturgy and sealed the deal again. God and Abram had a faithful conversation. They were committed to each other. Both had a stake in the relationship.

We are not all sent to foreign lands. Most of us don't have to give up family and friends to go where God is calling us. No matter where we are, we don't have to be out of God's reach at any time. For most young people, their cell phone is like an extension of their hand, or ear even. They don't go anywhere without it. They want to be in contact with their friends wherever they are. Now me, I am of a different generation. I use a cell phone, but there are way too many times that I forget to keep it with me. I leave the house and the phone is on a night stand or something. My son finds this amusing. This is a closer analogy to how we can be with God. We can pray at anytime, but we often act like we left our cell phone at home. So, you go to school and it seems to us that God can't contact you when you are talking with someone at your locker, or in the gym or on the school grounds at the end of the school day. You go to work and it seems like God can't contact you when you are making a business deal, or decisions that affect others. We struggle with family difficulties and it seems that God can't contact us when we are in the midst of despair. We have fear with illness and we wonder if we can contact God or if God will contact us.

Jesus faced all of life's difficulties, even death. In our gospel lesson, the religious leaders thought he was in danger and encouraged him to leave and save himself. He expressed no worries, it wasn't his time. This was a yes to God the Father. Then it's like he made a phone call and no one was answering. Jerusalem, oh Jerusalem, how I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks. You are not listening for my voice and it will lead you to despair.

The contract we have with God is not one way. It is not like we have a cell phone and we can contact God whenever we want. It is more like we have a cell phone and God has one too. God can call us whenever he wants to. Our Lenten discipline is to answer the call; hear the message. I like to think that you are on God's favorites. You are on his speed dial.

Till and listen for God to meet with us in our quiet place?