

Bouquet Caboodle



Highland Lectionary Series

March 1, 2026

“Born Again”

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17;

John 3:1-17

Today’s Big Idea

Faith, which is actionable trust, opens the gate for the life of God to seed in us, fill us, and transform us into humans fully alive! (Gloria enim Dei vivens

Homo: Irenaeus)

The Lectionary Thread

Born from above, born of water and Spirit: **John**

Righteousness that comes by faith: **Romans**

Looking to God for help: **Psalm**

Abraham following God into the unknown: **Genesis**

Defining our Familiar Terms (Again)

“Faith”: actionable trust

“Righteousness”: being in good relationship with God

“Born Again”: born from above, or from the top, or a do-over originating from heaven

The Relationship Between Faith and Being Born From Above

To be born from above is to be given a seed of the Trinitarian Life embedded in one’s being

The difference between image of God (mold) and the seed of Trinitarian Life (substance)

Receiving the seed by faith, where *baptism is the faith-claim* of the invisible operation

Holy Spirit responds to faith (baptism): John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 1 Cor 12:13; Titus 3:4-6

Evidence of the new birth is the exponential persevering of faith

Living Psalm 121 Brings the Strands Together

Perhaps a benediction/blessing for a pilgrim leaving temple/festival worship

God is my helper, shade, protector, keeper

The chemistry of faith: when the promise crashes into the anti-promise

Reject God: change allegiance to another god, or myself; adopt another kind of risk

Reinterpret God: encourager, heavenly rewarder, benevolent passive observer; avoid risk

Reinforce God: insist on a bigger picture, persist in risk, like Abraham: Rom 4:20-21; Hebrews 11:19

Though He slay me at will I trust Him: Job 13:15

The Key Excerpts for This Week's Thematic Thread

<i>Genesis 12:1-4a</i>	<i>Psalm 121</i>	<i>Romans 4:1-5, 13-17</i>	<i>John 3:1-17</i>
<p>Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." 4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.</p>	<p>1 I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? 2 My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. 3 He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. 4 He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. 6 The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night. 7 The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. 8 The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.</p>	<p>3 For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." 4 Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. 5 But to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. 13 For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 16 For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, 17 as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.</p>	<p>Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person." 3 Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' 8 The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." 9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"</p>

Next Week's Readings: What thread do you discern?

March 8, 2026 - Third Sunday of Lent - Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

Expansion of Section Three:

The Relationship Between Faith and Being Born From Above

To be born from above is to be given a seed of the Trinitarian Life embedded in one's being

Meaning we receive a new life that is not our own, that we do not originate, that does not originate from us or within ourselves, but from above, from the life of God in heaven, the very Trinitarian reality at the center of all being, what we might call *eternal life*, this life is freely given to a heart that opens itself to receipt of it by faith. Faith is that actionable trust that really believes God wants to give us His life, to call us His children, to forgive us our sins and adopt us into His family, and this belief (where does this come from is a mystery! But we must ultimately conclude it somehow comes from God, even though it is not an overriding of the freedom of the creature, and that it comes to all, though all do not appear to believe or receive it, at least initially) is demonstrated in wanting the life, asking for life, pursuing the life, relinquishing obstacles to the life, and all of this wrapped up and given embodied form in the public willful act of baptism. The life in the Trinitarian Seed is embedded into the fabric of the human being, into its soul/spirit/body in a permanent and transformative fusion, mixing in with the vestiges of first life, working like an antibody to both destroy over time anti-life elements in the old life, and metamorphosing the human being into congruence with its character.

The difference between image of God (mold) and the seed of Trinitarian Life (substance)

Someone very well might ask what is the difference between the image of God in all humans, and the seed of Trinitarian Life given to those whose beings are opened up to receive it by faith (actionable trust in God). I would answer that the image of God is the mold designed by God to hold Trinitarian Life but it itself is not the Trinitarian Life. The image of God is the ice cube tray. The Trinitarian life is the water that becomes ice cubes. When Adam and Eve were created, they were created innocent but not perfect, meaning they were molds that could hold the divine life once they were saturated with the necessary preparatory wash of faith. Instead of faith (actionable trust), Adam and Eve demonstrated the opposite, and cut themselves off from the Trinitarian Life Seed (represented by cherubim guarding the way to the Tree of Life).

Receiving the seed by faith, where *baptism is the faith-claim* of the invisible operation

Water in John 3:3 might very well refer to the act of baptism (John's baptism being in the foreground). Here we cannot think of baptism as a magical ritual that procures the Trinitarian life, but rather is an outward manifestation of faith—it is the actionable trust that truly believes that God offers and will give the Trinitarian life to the one who believes Jesus' words that the offer is on the table. It is the act of claiming the gift—or rather a faith declaration that the invisible gift has been claimed and is being counted on to do its

transformative work. *Spirit* in John 3:3 emphasizes the Trinitarian life and its agent of transmission, the Holy Spirit, Who is the essence of the transmission of the love between the Father and the Son, and who brings the life of heaven down, embedding such life in the human soul as She Herself indwells in that human soul—the Trinitarian Life and the Holy Spirit inextricable realities.

Holy Spirit responds to faith (baptism): John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 1 Cor 12:13; Titus 3:4-6

This transmission of Holy Spirit into the human person is like wind: invisible and uncontrolled by the humans involved, and yet leaving evidence of its presence in external signs of exponentially persevering faith. This connection between baptism and Holy Spirit is a clearly reinforced theme across the New Testament as the cited passages show.

Evidence of the new birth is the exponential persevering of faith

What I mean by “exponentially persevering faith” is that the fruit of Trinitarian Life is an on-going multiplication of the presence of faith in the human soul—a deepening trust in God that manifests itself, and gets stronger, in circumstances where such trust is challenged, particularly in moments and places that seem to suggest God’s absence, inattention, or failure to follow through on His promises. This is the mysterious chemistry of the new birth: that faith grows most in the moments that appear to be faith-killers.