Genesis 21:8-21

8 The child grew, and was weaned;
and Abraham made a great feast
on the day that Isaac was weaned.

9 But Sarah saw
the son of Hagar the Egyptian,
whom she had borne to Abraham,
playing with her son Isaac.

10 So she said to Abraham,
'Cast out this slave woman with her son;
for the son of this slave woman
shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.'

11 The matter was very distressing to Abraham
on account of his son.

12 But God said to Abraham,
'Do not be distressed
because of the boy
and because of your slave woman;
whatever Sarah says to you,
do as she tells you,
for it is through Isaac
that offspring shall be named after you.

13 As for the son of the slave woman,
I will make a nation of him also,
because he is your offspring.'

14 So Abraham rose early in the morning,
and took bread and a skin of water,
and gave it to Hagar,
putting it on her shoulder,
along with the child,
and sent her away.

And she departed,
and wandered about
in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

15 When the water in the skin was gone,
she cast the child under one of the bushes.

16 Then she went and sat down
opposite him a good way off,
about the distance of a bowshot;
for she said,
'Do not let me look on the death of the child.'

And as she sat opposite him,
she lifted up her voice and wept.

17 And God heard the voice of the boy;
and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven,
and said to her, 'What troubles you, Hagar?
Do not be afraid;
for God has heard the voice of the boy
where he is.

18 Come, lift up the boy
and hold him fast with your hand,
for I will make a great nation of him.'

19 Then God opened her eyes,
and she saw a well of water.

She went, and filled the skin with water,
and gave the boy a drink.

20 God was with the boy, and he grew up;
he lived in the wilderness,
and became an expert with the bow.

21 He lived in the wilderness of Paran;
and his mother got a wife for him
from the land of Egypt.

Matthew 10:24-39

24 ‘A disciple is not above the teacher,
nor a slave above the master;

25it is enough for the disciple
to be like the teacher,
and the slave
like the master.

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul,
how much more will they malign those of his household!

26 ‘So have no fear of them;
for nothing is covered up
that will not be uncovered,
and nothing secret
that will not become known.

27What I say to you in the dark,
tell in the light;
and what you hear whispered,
proclaim from the housetops.

28Do not fear those who kill the body
but cannot kill the soul;
rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

29Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?
Yet not one of them will fall to the ground
unperceived by your Father.

30And even the hairs of your head are all counted.

31So do not be afraid;
you are of more value than many sparrows.

32 ‘Everyone therefore
who acknowledges me before others,
I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven;

33but whoever denies me before others,
I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

34 ‘Do not think
that I have come to bring peace to the earth;
I have not come to bring peace,
but a sword.

35 For I have come
to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

36 and one’s foes
will be members of one’s own household.

37Whoever loves father or mother
more than me
is not worthy of me;

and whoever loves son or daughter
more than me
is not worthy of me;

38and whoever does not take up the cross
and follow me
is not worthy of me.

39Those who find their life will lose it,
and those who lose their life
for my sake
will find it.

Reading Torah This Week

The church continues the cycle of patriarchs' legends,
with the story of young Isaac, and of Ishmael
don't overlook the women: Sarah, Hagar, and Rebekah

Long-awaited Isaac survives to be weaned,
playing with older brother Ishmael, already of age,
an apparent happy ending

Reading this not as history or fiction about individuals
but as a framing of ethnicity, race, nation within humanity,
Avram and Sarah, Mesopotamians (Ur) via Aramea (Haran)
Hagar the Egyptian, Ishmael ancestor of Arabs, Egyptian wife
(Rebekah fetched from Aramea later to marry Isaac)
Neither is this story of genetics or selective breeding

We the hearers/readers are assumed to have a location,
among the people of Israel, rooted in Abraham-Isaac-Jacob
neighbours of Arameans, Egyptians, Babylonians,
(and Moabites, Edomites with related legends or relationship)

Sarah demands that Abraham banish, exile Hagar – he does
south into desert with little bread, water, child, mother
(in tension with Ishmael already come of age in c.17)
she leaves him under a bush, a bowshot away, and resigns
Till God appears, assures, and provides

Talmud and Quran string out the stories, even Genesis
concedes that Ishmael and Isaac buried Abraham together –
the Kaaba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, enshrines the spring or well

Can you get past the genocide, infanticide
see the agency not only of patriarchs but matriarchs?
What's at stake? Why tell the story?

Reading the Gospel This Week

The lectionary continues in Matthew,
a series of 'post-it note' bits of teaching attributed to Jesus
placed after the delegation of mandates to the 12
(and warnings of resistance to come)

24-25 completes last week's lection on conflict
if Jesus is demonized, so will his disciples be
(Luke 6:40 fits 24)

26-33 is a tighter version of Luke 12:2-9
about how cover-ups will fail, air and light prevail
(Mk 4:22 and 8:38 echo clips of 30 and 33)

34-36 again tighten up a later bit in Luke, 12:51-53
about internal community, family conflict, not peace

37-39 is paralleled in Luke 14:26-27
choosing Jesus over family

We recognize 'God sees the little sparrow fall'
but didn't hear much of the rest of this in UCC's
why does the book include it, or we avoid it?
how would 'holier' sectarians read it?

We don't get repeat of Gentile/Samaritan/Israel terms
but there is lots of 'us' and 'them' in this text –
Jesus' allies and opponents, and Matthew's community's
Who are your 'us' and your 'them', family or disrespecters?

Can you manage a conversation with Torah today,
about the processes of distinguishing 'us' from 'them'?
(language is differential, not referential)