

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

Genesis 12:1-9

Sunday 7th June 2020

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

"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. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

Abram travelled 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. The 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.

From 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. Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

Over the next few months we are going to take some time to look at three biblical giants. We will explore their faith, the challenges they faced and where they met God in the midst of them. Today we begin our series looking at the life and faith of Abraham.

So what do we know about Abraham? We first meet Abraham (or Abram as he was originally called) in Genesis chapter 11 where we discover that he is a descendant of Noah; that he has a wife called Sarai and that they do not have any children because Sarai is unable to conceive. Our passage from Genesis 12 begins to paint a picture of Abram as a man of faith and obedience to God's word; a man who has found favour with God.

Verses 2 and 3 of Genesis 12 set out a wonderful promise that God has made to Abram – "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..." And so we see the faithfulness of God to Abram – the promise that God would reverse the heart-breaking barrenness of Sarai to make Abram into a great nation. We also see the promise that God would make Abram's name great – something given as a gift from God, not something Abram has to, or indeed is able to, achieve in his own strength. This provides a stark contrast to the account of the Tower of Babel which appears in the chapter before in Genesis 11.

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Babel is a story of humans striving at all costs to make their own name great, but here, after the attempts at Babel have failed, we see God promising Abram that He, God, *will* make Abram's name great.

Abram is a man who has received a great blessing from God, but verse 2 also includes God's command to Abram that he is to "be a blessing" and as we explore the story of Abram we will discover what being a blessing would mean for Abram. I wonder if there are ways that God is calling us to be a blessing to those around us today?

As I read this initial dialogue between God and Abram there are 2 things I want to briefly explore. The first is the obedience of Abram to follow God's call not knowing where it would lead. God asks Abram to pick up everything he has and take his whole family away from everything they have ever known, but God doesn't tell Abram where they are going. It is an act of pure faith and trust in God. "Go", says God "to the land I will show you". I don't know about you, but I think at this stage I would have had several questions: Where are we going God? Will we ever return? But we do not hear Abram say anything, we simply witness a man of faith committing himself to God wherever God calls him to go; hearing and knowing the voice of God and following it; dedicating his life to being a blessing, wherever God may lead.

In these uncertain times where our roadmap may be unclear and our hopes for the future may feel like they are on hold I wonder what God has to say to us about trusting in Him – trusting in his promises and in his word even though it may feel scary and uncertain. I wonder what promises God has for you as you sit and wait on him? I wonder what God is calling you to do in this season?

The second thing we learn at the end of the passage in verse 7 is that it is to Abram's offspring that God will give the land. While the promises to Abram are great, he will not see everything fulfilled in his lifetime. He is to sow seeds which his offspring will see the fruit of. I wonder what seeds we are sowing at the moment? As we speak to our neighbours, as we serve our community, as we sit as beacons of hope in an uncertain time we may well be sowing seeds in our neighbours and friends that we don't even realise we are sowing. Indeed, they may be seeds that we won't see the fruit of, but I wonder if God is encouraging us to keep going – trusting that God will water the seeds and bring them to blossom in his perfect time.

Rev Vicki Bryson

Rector: The Revd Vicki Bryson



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