

Genesis 12 Sermon

(NRSVA) 1 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. 5 Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak[b] of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, 'To your offspring[c] I will give this land.' So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord. 9 And Abram journeyed on by stages towards the Negeb.

Introduction.

A few years ago I did the Pilgrimage to Canterbury. Walked out of our front door, and walked 100 miles over five days. Remarkable experience, life simplified to the essentials, time to talk and to be silent, people you meet along the way. The destination is not the end in itself, but it is the thing that makes sense of the journey.

Our passage tonight is the story of a departure. A Wonderful story of faithfulness against the odds, and it is foundational because Abraham is the Patriarch - the father of not just for the OT People of God, but for all of us who believe.

It begins v1 Go... v1 Leave your world behind. Your identity, your security, your wealth, your status. and **Become a nomad. A wanderer.**

This imperative to depart is defining of faith. We leave the world we know behind to discover a new one.

God's call means to sacrifice the things we place our confidence in, our comfort, our security And to become Peter 1Pet2 as foreigners and exiles - strangers and pilgrims

It stands in contrast to sin and judgement. So far genesis has been largely a story of the fall, failure and curse.

But here is another story. God is working out blessing in the world.

And note it is not for one man, or one family, but it was for the sake of the world.

Need to come to terms with the selfishness of religion. It is about me being right with God, my family being blessed, my people being prosperous. Here at the beginning of the story is God's intention, only fully revealed in Jesus who gives himself for his enemies.

It begins with a God who speaks...

However beware of the arrogance of thinking Abraham=us. This is a landmark moment, the beginning of God's plan of redemption.

Abraham is 75 years old. Like Moses. who had to wait until he was 80.

We are expected to trust and to act on what we know of God.

No hand holding.

God says v3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. Why does God act through human beings. Why not direct, individual? Abraham is blessed, in order to be a blessing.

Blessing is largely mediated through people. How has God blessed you? Primarily through people - family, friends, church.

Made in the image of God means in part to be God's blessing to others.

v4 So Abraham went...

This is hugely significant. God calls, Abraham responds. The NT writers see him not just as the Patriarch of the Hebrews, but as the Father of all who believe. Romans 4 Abraham believes and it is credited to him as righteousness.

He is the model of Justification by faith. It is not by good works, or because he is moral, or intelligent, or theologically correct.

He responds to God's invitation. He believes and that faith directs his life.

Faith is the currency of heaven.

Note that. Faith inspires action. We live by it.

Faith means to step out. To let go, to enter the wilderness. To trust.

v1 *'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house*

So what does that look like for you?

To let go of certainty and security and the things you trust in.

You will be exiles. - let go of the need for approval by your peers.

You will be pilgrims - let go of the need for possessions and money.

You are wanderers - To let go of the need to be in control.

You are strangers - imagine life beyond the conventional. Your belonging is among the pilgrim people of God.

Imagine never making a name for yourself. Your glory is the glory of God.

What do you hold on to most? What is God calling you to leave?

And instead find blessing in the purposes of God.

Invest your inheritance in the Lord.

"I will make you..."

Contrast to Babel 'Let us make a name for ourselves...'

Find Joy in God's purposes.

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29)

Find belonging as part of the people of God.

This is not individual blessing - you are part of the people of God. And that stretches into eternity. This is all saints' tide. The church universal, seen and unseen. The great crowd of witnesses - which includes Abraham himself.

As part of a restored creation.

v7 Note the future focus. We seek that promised land, the new creation which God will lead us to.

Conclusion

God has begun something extraordinary in this world. In contrast to corruption and sin, God has a plan of redemption and blessing.

And he asks us to go. To leave behind our security for the sake of a coming kingdom, and a new creation.

So remember when you feel anxious or alone, or doubtful or tired. When you feel like you don't belong, or life in the here and now isn't all you had hoped - That is what it means to be pilgrims. And you find your strength and your comfort in the presence of God and amongst his people, and hope for the land that God will show you.