

Covenant
by The Rev. Damaris D. Whittaker

Genesis 12:1-9
Rally Sunday
September 14, 2014

*“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house,”
the Lord says to Abram, “to the land that I will show you.”*

Let us pray...

We begin the church year with great enthusiasm; firmly believing that God has great things in store for us.

I believe. I believe that God’s presence is among us. I believe that God has called all of us. I look to the future, not with a spirit of fear, with a heart full of hope and faith.

When challenges have presented themselves in this past year, I reminded myself that this is God’s church and you are God’s people.

I truly believe what Romans 14:8 says: “for if we live, we live for God, or if we die, we die for God; therefore whether we live or die, we are Gods.”

I also believe that this year, God continues to invite us to go into a pilgrimage; but if our pilgrimage, our journey, is anything like Abram’s, it will be to go outside of our comfort zone.

The scripture this morning focuses on the call of Abraham, who once was called Abram. But more impressive than that amazing and challenging call to leave his country and his father’s house to go to a land that was unknown—is the fact that Abraham does it.

He goes.

Why does Abram go? What moves him forward?

The “Law of diffuse innovation” might help explain. The law of diffusion is a theory that seeks to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas are adopted through cultures and individuals.

And, essentially, proves that those leaders, whose message is focus on the “why” which is the core of believes, have a greater rate of adoption.

Essentially, those leaders’ or organizations who “believe” will succeed, even if their resources are limited. Even if they don’t have all of the requirements. And this is the truth with Abraham.

Abraham followed the call, because his message was not focused on where or how or what, he was led by “why.” And that was--he not only believed in God, but he believed God.

He was called to a land that he had not known or seen. He is being called into the future—what to do when he got there, was not the issue.

To live by faith is to understand that we do not have control over everything in our lives.

Moving with God into the future, requires a great amount of faith, and perhaps we will not see the results of this in our lifetime.

How did Abraham go?

First, Abram headed out in response to what he perceived as a call from God. The writer of Hebrews says this was because of Abram’s faith, but the Old Testament writer doesn’t use that word. He simply points out that Abram “went.” He obeyed the call. Obedience is evidence of faith, of course, but it is faith in action.

- Second, when Abram arrived at his destination, he listened for what God wanted him to do there. He built the altar at Shechem because he became aware that God was speaking to him.
- Third, he “invoked” the name of the Lord. That is, he did what he could to make the place where he was God’s place.
- Fourth, he worked as a selfless peacemaker. In the conflict with Lot, he put his own desires last.
- Fifth, he grew in his own understanding of God because he journeyed where God wanted him to go.¹

And why Abraham?

Why us?

What’s all this for?

He was 75 at the time of his call. He was a wealthy man-settled. Abraham’s life is one small contribution to a blessing to the nations of the world.

What does it mean to be blessed for all the nations of the world to be blessed?

¹ Homiletis, Faith Trips, Feb. 17, 2008

Well, this is the beginning of a larger story a story will lead us through to our savior. A story that has a covenant of relationship with God—a spiritual relationship as a premise.

A story of election. The election is for the sake of the whole world. We are called for the sake of a whole world.

We are blessed in order to be a blessing to the whole world.

A story that takes us in a spiritual journey a pilgrimage of faith is, in some ways, the purest kind of faith, because it is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

And, in this journey into an unknown future, we are exercising the “Law of diffusion” and centering not on the how, what or where, but in the “why” and that reason is:

We believe in God’s covenant with us-- God is with us, just as God was with Abram. It was “by faith” that Abram “set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance,” says the letter to the Hebrews (11:8); “and he set out, not knowing where he was going.”

The covenant of faith is that God will guide us, if we are faithful in the long run. We’ll make it to the goal God has for us, one step at a time. Amen.