

How is Abram's Story our Story? Genesis – Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18
March 17, 2019

Please pray with me. We come to you, O God, often wondering about the fulfillment of promises that seems to take so long. But even in our questioning, we come to you in trust. We trust you will bring good to us and to all. Help us to build our lives on your promises. Amen.

Last week we talked about how the stories of our ancestors in faith were our stories as well. And each of these stories has a little different message for us. The story we are hearing today, Abram's story, is a story about *trust* – *trust* in God. It also speaks to us about how our faith can help us to view the world – with a glass half full and brimming over or a glass half full and quickly draining. In addition, Abram's story is about *doubt* and ultimately it lets us know that even our great ancestors in the faith had doubts – Abram wasn't the only one through the ages for sure. Remember doubting Thomas?

We think that things were different with heroes of the Bible. They lived much simpler lives and God was much more real to them than to us. That is just not true. It is interesting when Abram says something that you or I would say. He asks God, "But how can I know that all this will come to pass?" Like many of us, Abram believed in God and he believed God, but sometimes it is difficult – for Abram and for us – to be patient and understand that God's time doesn't always match our time. As a matter of fact, I find that it rarely matches my timetable.

Abram believed God, and the writer of Genesis tells us that "the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness." This is the Old Testament verse that is the foundation for so much of the theology of the New Testament. In the Hebrew faith

salvation came through righteousness. Only people who did right in the eyes of the Lord could expect to be rewarded. But, says the writer of Genesis, because Abram believed God, it was counted as his being righteous. Believing God was more important than keeping the Law. We see this later on in the New Testament when Jesus tells us that God's grace and love, and our love for one another, is more important than keeping the Law.

Abram's story begins when, after his father Terah's death, God tells him to leave the land of his ancestors, and leads Abram along with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot to the land of Canaan and Abram is 75 years old. God tells Abram, "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." (12:2) As the years pass God does bless Abram, he becomes a wealthy man. But Abram is also aware that he is not a perfect man and so, can he trust that God will bless him more? After all, at Sarai's request he fathered a son by their servant girl and he passed his wife off as his sister. He has no heir so a servant will inherit his property and he and Sarai have no one to care for them in their old age or provide for their burial. Abram is concerned. Finally, God takes him outside to count the stars and tells him he shall have a multitude of descendants and that his name shall now be Abraham – father of nations – and his wife will no longer be called Sarai, but she will be Sarah. Sarah bears a son by Abraham and his descendants are as the stars in the sky--both biological descendants and spiritual descendants--for all three of the great monotheistic world religions--Judaism, Islam and Christianity--trace their history back to Abram, whom we know as Abraham. God fulfilled God's promise to Abram. Though Abram

had his times of backsliding, ultimately, he took the promises of God seriously and he was rewarded for his faith. Now we can be pretty certain that we won't be the parents of any great multitude of people or the founder of a faith, but we can and will be rewarded for our faith – that I am confident of.

In this morning's on-line devotional, Kenneth Samuel, a pastor/contributor, tells us that "God is the love that never leaves us alone. Even when we would be content to settle for that which is more reasonable. God is the love that wakes us from our slumbers of disillusionment, and lets us know that we are still wanted."

So, as we continue this Lenten journey, let us make it a point to pay attention to where God is leading us, to believe in God and to trust in God. Amen.