

The Journey of Faith Genesis 12:1-9

How many of you like to travel? I love traveling. Whether it is exploring new places on vacation, or following new trails on a hike, I have a good bit of wanderlust. We spend lots of time traveling; going to work, to school, to the store, to doctor's appointments, visiting family and friends, even going to church.

Travel can mean different things, depending on the situation. Often travel is a necessary chore; but then there are times when traveling is an adventure. Our Christian life, if nothing else, is best described as an adventure. Open your Bible and you see time and time again God calling people into God's venture, a journey of faith. Think of Jesus going up to fishermen and saying "follow me." And they do! Think of Israel, enslaved in Egypt, and Moses coming and saying to them – "Pack your bags, we're leaving," and then they spend the next 40 years, a lifetime, traveling through the wilderness on the way to the promised land.

From the very beginning of the Biblical accounts our spiritual lives are recognized as an on-going journey. From the time Adam and Eve were pushed out of the garden to the final trumpet call that carries us through heaven's gates we are on a journey – an adventure called living by faith. And it is living by faith. In today's Scripture reading we hear a great deal about the beginning of God's covenantal relationship with his people. And it begins with an invitation, a call to journey with Him into the unknown. The first we hear of Abram is when God simply says to him "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you..." So Abram went, as the Lord had told him...: (Genesis 12:1, 4a)

It seems simple enough, but ask yourself "what did Abraham and Sarah know about God before this?" There was no Bible to read, no synagogue or church to guide them, no pastor or priest or rabbi who had any more knowledge of God than Abram himself. And yet Abraham (and Sarah) packed up and left, as the book of Hebrews says "not knowing where they were to go." Now that's living by faith!

And that story, as simple and brief as it is, has become a foundation for all others who would follow in Abraham and Sarah's footsteps. It is the founding story of the Old Testament, of the people we call Israel. And it is referred to over and over again in the New Testament where Abraham's faith is held up as an example for Christians to follow.

The call to Abraham and Sarah, the call to leave all - home and family, house and lands and community, the comfortable and familiar and safe way of doing things, and to go to a land they had not seen and did not possess is God's call to a journey, a journey of faith.

Would you have had the courage to take that journey?

Yet that call from God has extended throughout the ages, from the days of Abraham, to this very morning. It is an invitation into a real adventure where all there is for us, all we have to go on, is

a promise, and a purpose, and a presence. The promise God gives us, is that when we are willing to pack up, and leave behind what we must, and set forth only with the courage to follow God's lead, then God will be with us, and God will lead us to a new land, a new place. It will be a place where we will be blessed, a place of richness we cannot imagine.

But it will not only be for us and for our children, for our welfare and our well-being, it will be a place of blessing for everyone, for people in Southhampton, and for all the world. God did not bless Abraham and Sarah only for their sake, He blessed Abram so that Abram could become a blessing for all the families of the earth.

That is the real purpose for the people of God- to bring God's blessing to the world. As we live by faith, as we journey with God, we are, as Paul says "spreading- in every place - the fragrance that comes from knowing Christ" We are representatives of Christ, (2 Corinthians 5:20) sent on a journey, sent into the world, to share with the world the blessing of God that are ours in Christ Jesus.

We who have put our faith and trust in God are called by the Scriptures "the spiritual children of Abraham" and so, we have the same call as Abraham. We are called, you and I, to a journey like that of Abraham and Sarah, a journey without a map, but with a promise, a promise that God will be with us, to guide us and support us. Like most journeys, it will have its fill of challenges and rewards. It will be a journey which requires time and wisdom, a journey where we may sometimes get turned around, and sometimes need to rest on the way; but it will be a journey in which the Spirit of Christ will always be with us, to bless us, and to bless the world through us.

So, in our time ahead our journey together will be like Abraham's and Sarah's. We will hear God's call to leave those places that are known and secure. And we will answer God's invitation into a living, trusting relationship. God will offer us to new opportunities, opportunities to use our resources for the common good. We will follow God's call in in faith and hope as Abraham and Sarah once followed him. And we will live in the assurance of God's great blessings to us, and through us bless all people.

Let us journey on now in faith, let us journey together as pastor and people, blessing the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, blessing the God of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, in worship and service. Amen

Rev. Rosemary Dawson