

St. Paul: On The Same page

03.09.14 for Lent 2a

Day One: Genesis 12:1-9

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you...⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. ... There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

Of all the miracles in the Bible, this seems the smallest. Compared to parting the Red Sea, or sending daily bread and meat, or raining down fire from heaven, or preserving three men in the middle of a blazing furnace, what is so special about a man moving to a new country?

But you have some things that Abram did not have. And I don’t mean good maps or a GPS system or nice hotels and restaurants along the way. Abram lived at a time when the knowledge of God was still something passed along only by word of mouth. He had no Bible, not even a single scroll. All that he knew about the true God was what his parents told him. And he

lived among people who believed in many other gods.

Now he is being asked to take his family and leave a settled and prosperous area around one of the ancient world’s earliest big cities, and move to a place he had never seen, to a life that would be completely cut off from his home and family.

And all the Bible says about his response is this: “So Abram went, as the Lord had told him...”

This is the greatest kind of miracle. Mountains are easy to move. Our machines do it all the time. But people are very hard to change. And yet, God calls us, equips us, gives us courage, leads us, and blesses us even in tasks that are beyond our abilities.

God blessed Abram when Abram did not know where he was going. The great results were not because of Abram’s knowledge or skill, but because of God’s guiding. Although Abram is long gone, God your Father is still here to guide your journey.

Prayer: *Father, you worked a miracle in guiding Abram. Now guide me, today and always, wherever you send me. Amen.*

Day Two: Rom 4:1-8, 13-17

It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

There was one job at which I never had a performance evaluation, but I had the strictest standards of all. That's when I worked as a machinist in my father's tool and die shop.

Let's face it; my dad wasn't going to fire me. After all, working for him was how I was paying for college! But just because I knew that I had a guaranteed job, that doesn't mean my dad was easy on me. On the contrary, my father was more closely aware of what I was doing in the shop

than he was of anyone else. And even though he treated us all alike, my father's look of disappointment and frustration when I would mess up was a much harder punishment for me than it was for my coworkers.

I think I was not too bad as a machinist, but the truth is I did not have my job because of my ability, and I did not keep my job because of my hard work. I had my job because of my father's love for me. And I kept my job, even when I made mistakes, because of his forgiveness that came from his love for me.

Abraham tried hard to obey God, but he was still a sinful man. I tried hard to please my father, but I was still not the perfect employee. But Abraham and I were saved by grace, not by our work. We were saved as a gift, out of love, not by how hard we tried.

If you worked for God, what kind of boss would he be?

Prayer: *Dear Father, thank you for calling me to serve you. It is an honor and a joy to work beside you, and live in your love and mercy. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Day Three: John 3:1-17

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.""

"Words! Words! Words! I'm so sick of words! I get words all day through; first from him, now from you! Is that all you blighters can do?"

Those are the words of Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*. She expresses a common point of view. Actions and tangible things are worth more than words. Even just a single photograph is said to be worth more than 1,000 words.

But Jesus says just the opposite. He says that every single word that comes from the mouth of God is even more precious, more beneficial even than food!

How can that be? Our problem with words comes from the fact that we typically don't mean them. We shade the truth; we obscure; we

dodge; we dance around the topic; or we lie outright. Even when we want to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, we are seldom if ever successful in expressing it. After all, we seldom know the whole truth.

And if, by some miracle, you verbalize the absolute truth, then you will fail to live up to it. You fail to follow through, stay faithful, keep your promises.

But God's word IS truth. Every word from God is the expression of absolute reality, even beyond what is visible or verifiable to us. God keeps his promises, not just for a moment or a day, but forever.

Bread, like nice words, might satisfy your hunger for a few hours. But God's word is a different kind of nutrition. It is the source of life because God has promised life to those who live in him.

This is part of why Christians sometimes fast. They skip a meal, or even many meals, to remember where their real food is.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, make me hungry for the very best food, and then fill me up. Amen.*

Day Four:

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 Haran. ⁵He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. Genesis 12:4-5

A manufacturing line is moved from Dearborn to Shanghai and you have to move with it. Your company closes its local office. You get to keep your job, but you'll have to move to Dallas. You graduate from college and get job offers, but none of them are in Michigan.

These are pretty familiar stories for us, aren't they? We see them all the time, but we seldom see God's hand in them. After all, what does God have to do with building homes, or manufacturing transmissions, or writing software, or making loans? If I have to move my family to another state, find new schools, join another church, choose new doctors, is that really God's plan for me?

Think about Abraham. What did he spend most of his

time on? He was not a priest. He believed in the true God, but he did not preach, or lead a congregation, or build a church, or write a book. Abraham spent his time managing flocks and herds. He ran a very large agricultural business, with hundreds of employees and their dependants. Abraham was not very different from a CEO or a plant manager today.

Yes, God called him. And through the birth of his son Isaac late in life God would build a nation and bring a Savior. But Abraham's daily part in serving God was doing the work God gave him to do... farming.

God has called you also. You have a vocation, a calling. In that calling there may be times that you specifically speak God's word. But you serve him even in your humblest labor, because it is how God supplies you and your neighbor. Your work is God's work.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, some days I am weary of my work. Help me to see your purpose in ALL that I do. Let me serve you joyfully today. Amen.*