

Genesis 12:1-8

Pentecost 16; September 29 & 30, 2019

God has a way of turning our lives upside down. His way of thinking, his way of acting, and his way of speaking is often the exact opposite of our way of thinking, acting and speaking. Jesus told us to pray to our heavenly Father, *"Thy will be done,"* for a good reason. God's will and my will are often on the opposite sides of a long tug-of-war rope, with a messy mud puddle in the middle. He often pulls us toward things that just don't make sense. He even seems to enjoy pulling us through the mud puddle. Why? He wants to change our life. He wants us to trust him, not ourselves. He wants us to see his life-changing blessings that he has poured into our lives. God has a way of turning our lives upside down.

God was about to turn Abraham's life upside down. Can you imagine what the dinner conversation must have sounded that night when Abraham told his wife that they were moving.

"Why are we moving?" "God told us to?"

"Where are we going?" "I'm not sure. God hasn't told me yet."

"Our lives are here. Your father is here."

"We're not too young anymore." (Abraham was 75 years old; Sarah was 65 year's old.)

Would you go? Abraham had a good life. He had so many reasons to stay. Yet, he trusted and lived on the promises of God. We are told: **"So Abram went, as the Lord had told him."** God told him to go, and he went. This was one of those great acts of faith. The writer of the book of Hebrews speaks about this act of faith of Abraham's **"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."** (Heb. 11:8) But before Abraham and his wife left, God gave Abraham seven promises.

"I will make you into a ¹ great nation, and I will ² bless you; I will make your ³ name great, and ⁴ you will be a blessing. ⁵ I will bless those who bless you, and ⁶ whoever curses you I will curse; and ⁷ all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." What is remarkable about these promises is that they didn't depend upon Abraham doing anything. God did not tell Abraham that IF Abraham went, THEN he would bless him. God did not bless Abraham BECAUSE he obeyed God. He didn't tell Abraham that if he didn't go, then he would not bless him. Even before Abraham even goes, God says that He would bless him. These blessings are not a reward, but a gift. Abraham didn't earn any of these blessings. God simply gave them. God even gave Abraham the faith to believe. Abraham simply trusted the promises of God.

King David would later write: **"he (that is God) does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities."** (Ps. 103:10) Abraham didn't deserve any of God's blessings. We don't deserve any of God's blessings. Instead, God treated Jesus with what we had deserved. Through Jesus, we get peace. We get hope. We get forgiveness. God's promises do not depend upon us, but they depend upon God.

So, Abraham went. What happens when he gets to the land that God had promised him? God says to him: **"To your offspring I will give this land."** Sounds great, but there is already someone there. **"At that time the Canaanites were in the land."** How many offspring does Abraham have? 0 kids. Abraham was 75 years old and Sarah was 65 years old when they moved. They wouldn't even have their first child for another 25 years. Abraham would be a 100 years old and Sarah 90 years old when Isaac was born. Not exactly a great nation. In fact, Abraham would never see God fulfilling his promise of having descendants as numerous as the stars. It would take another 600 years for Abraham's descendants to see God keeping his promises. 600 years later the nation of Israel would leave Egypt with over 2 million people.

What about all those other promises that God had made to Abraham in verses 2 & 3 in our text? He kept every single one of them, especially that last one. **"All peoples on earth will be blessed through you."** You see, that's what Jesus brings. He brings blessings. He brings a solution to this world to save it. We have a God who keeps his promises. We have a God who cleans up the mess of sin in this world. Have you ever knocked a jar of spaghetti sauce off the counter? What happens when it hits the floor? It goes everywhere. Even though you might clean it up right away, you will most likely find remnants of that sauce for weeks or even years later. As hard as we might try, we can't clean it up perfectly. We might not be able to get all the stains out. As hard as might try, we can't get the stain of sin out of our hearts. So, God cleaned it up.

God specializes in broken people. He helps people who fail. We want to follow our hearts and not God's. We fail to have the kinds of marriages that God wants because we are sinful people. We fail to be the kind of parents that God desires. There are so many ways that we fail God every day. What does God do? He covers all those failures with the blood of Christ. He strengthens our faith in Jesus. He remembers our sins no more.

That's how God turns our worlds upside down. Jesus gets our hands on us. He says our sins died with Jesus on the cross. We were buried with him. And we were resurrected with him on Easter. His victory is our victory. That's how Jesus turns our worlds upside down. As we follow Jesus, that is what he gives to us as a gift. May God help all of us to follow Jesus when he says "Go." Amen.