

Readings

Scripture

¹Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²And 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. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

⁴So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, ⁶Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. ⁸From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. ⁹And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

¹⁰Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. ¹¹When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, ¹²and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. ¹³Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake." ¹⁴When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

¹⁷But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸So Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go." ²⁰And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.

- Genesis 12:1-20 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

The life of faith entails prompt obedience to God's word in a pilgrimage based on a revealed and perceived vision. Faith demands a ruthless abandonment of the past. Abraham has to leave the consolation of familiarity and tradition far behind. He has to jettison his family, his homeland, and the old ways of worship. But this abandonment leads to his fulfillment...The pilgrim's citizenship is in heaven, and he or she looks for a city whose architect and builder is God.

- Bruce Waltke, *Genesis* (p. 209)

Departure from securities is the only way out of barrenness. The whole of the Abrahamic narrative is premised on this seeming contradiction: to stay in safety is to remain barren; to leave in risk is to have hope.

- Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (p. 118)

Sermon Outline

What does it look like to be led by God?

Genesis 12:1-20

The Life of Blessing

Brad Anderson

The life of Abram offers us a living picture of journey with God... (Genesis 12:1-3)

How do we experience this God of Abram?

The God who leads us into our journey... (Genesis 12:4-5)

The God who leads us to envision our future homeland... (Genesis 12:6-9)

The God who leads us out of our unbelief... (Genesis 12:10-20)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- What is your most memorable journey? Was it a vacation? Did you fly? Walk? Drive? Travel by ship? What made it memorable? What setbacks did you encounter?
- Despite Abram's faithful obedience in Genesis 12:4-9, his own faithlessness in 12:10-20 threatens the fulfillment of the promise. When famine strikes the land (Genesis 12:10), Abram lies to Pharaoh about his wife Sarai (Genesis 12:11-20). How does this jeopardize the fulfillment of God's promise, "To your offspring I will give this land" (Genesis 12:7)? How does God intervene to ensure that his promises in these verses are fulfilled?
- How has God led you into journey? How have his promises secured your path?
- Are you surprised by the picture Abram's life gives you, mixed with belief and unbelief? Why or why not?
- How does Abram's age and station in life compare to our culture's view of retirement?
- How is God leading you out of unbelief and into greater trust? What present difficulties (like the famine Abram encountered) are being used by God in your life to lead you toward a future homeland?