

Someone wrote the song the choir just sang – It’s actually Psalm 8 and King David wrote it – “When I gaze into the night skies and see the work of your fingers; the moon and stars suspended in space . . . as I look up in the quiet of the night, a prayer escapes my lips – *what are we that you, God, are even aware of us?* Have you ever done that? Perhaps you have been in Colorado or maybe Canada where the galaxy seems really close on a clear summer’s night. And you just can’t help but think of our Creator. Or, in Texas, just about anywhere except the Metroplex, where nighttime can bring the darkest dark and the stars shine bright. That reminds me of “the stars at night are big and bright, deep in the heart of Texas . . .”

Or, have you been to the zoo lately, and seen just scores of different animals? My favorite is the San Diego zoo because not only do they have such a tremendous variety of animals, but also gardens with hundreds of kinds of plants. Certainly those of you who have been to places like Africa, when you see the array of wild animals you are awed by the creative majesty of God. Creation speaks, and points us to God. So we see God at times and God also speaks. Perhaps even when you pray for the church each day, in our 1+1+1 initiative to seek God’s vision, you might begin to hear God’s voice. And so that brought Abram to mind. I wondered what spoke to him to move him to follow God’s voice and leave Haran.

Are you reading the story? Last week we left Abram and Sarai, immobilized in Haran, and barren. Then God speaks, and Abram’s life changes forever. How did Abram hear the call? Do you long to hear the voice of God? How do we hear that voice loudly enough to follow? Today we’ll ask those questions. God spoke to Abram and he speaks to us today in the same way.

God spoke an incredible amount of blessing but the message was only activated by Abram’s following the call. Scripture is God’s story, and God’s story always involves us. God takes humanity seriously. We have a key role in God’s story, as God goes about achieving his purpose in the world. So the story has two parts, God’s initiatives and call, and our response and initiative to go with God.

Did you ever think of yourself as vital to making God’s blessing happen? We are not just robots to be manipulated in this relationship with God simply so God can do what he wants to do. No, God respects us as individuals and God doesn’t force or manipulate, but legitimately invites us to allow his work to happen through us, even through our shortcomings. Every person – no matter what your age – is tremendously important, and God has something for you that fits you exactly. So get ready – God is calling. Let’s see how it played out for Abram.

READ Genesis 12:1-9 and Romans 12:1-2

Abram stalled out when God called. Originally headed for Canaan, he and his family had stopped short of the goal. Then one day God called. According to the Hebrew text, the nuance to God’s call went like this, “Come on, let’s go!” “Get yourself up!” “I’m taking you somewhere, so come along!” It’s like getting a kid out of bed in the morning to go to school or getting yourself up for work. Either way, the words generally aren’t sweet, “Would you like to get up and go to school or work today?” That’s not how God spoke. God’s voice was compelling.

God said, “Get yourself up. *Let’s go.* I want to show you something.” God is on the move; he was up to something, and the call was to a close bond with God in order to receive blessing.

God has not made the world with a huge wall between himself and us. But often we have built a wall. God created the world with the intention of being personally involved. When we cut ourselves off from talking and listening to God, it’s like we cut out part of our hearts and minds. When we seek to live our lives under our own autonomy, we handicap ourselves and that affects us in many ways. But God’s invitation is to be connected, and Abram received that offer – “Let’s go; I’m giving you this land that I personally will show you. I will make your name great. (Babel – they tried to make their own name great.) Connect with me and I will lift you up. I will bless you so you will bless others.” And Abram went.

“When I gaze into the night skies and see the work of your fingers; the moon and stars suspended in space . . . as I look up in the quiet, I pray – *who am I that you, God, are even aware of me?* Yet God is aware of each and every human being. Abram heard that voice. Scripture tells us, *so Abram went, as the Lord had told him.*

Now he did not just go, he took everything and everybody. That was commitment but it wasn’t like he was just ditching his possessions and everything. It was more of an attitude of adventure. Abram was on a journey with God. What he ditched was letting his culture define his life. He went with God to see what God had. He saw beyond the culture. He left human success; the world’s ways.

We too must think about this. Whatever culture you are in, whether you are in school or college or at the time of defining your career, listen for the voice of God. If you are at the height of your career or even if you have retired, listen for the voice of God, because Abram was 75. He tells us we are never too old to live without a sense of adventure and a sense of what God has next for us.

Young people understand this concept of “going” a little better. They naturally look forward, anticipating the future, thinking about leaving home. But Abram did this well into his life. This is why Abram is heralded as such a man of faith. He didn’t think twice. Imagine if you received such a call and how it would affect your life. The changes would be profound.

Not only that, he convinced his wife Sarai to go. Now that was quite an accomplishment because the call almost sounded like it was from some sort of land speculator or timeshare promoter, it was so vague. “Let me show you some land.” But the thing about the call is that it mobilized a family that was paralyzed. Abram and Sarai were barren. This was it. He was 75. She was 55 (and Scripture says, she was very beautiful), yet they had no heirs and no future.

This man’s story teaches us about the meaning of faith. So the first thing we learn about faith is it’s all about a future. It’s all about hope. It’s about God creating something out of nothing. So living by faith is not about what you bring to the table.

Do you want to have faith? Do you want to hear God’s voice? Abram teaches us to simply present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice, which is your reasonable worship. That’s what Abram and Sarai did. They said, Here we are, ready to go. For the Christian, it is not extraordinary to be asked not to be conformed to this world. And yet a study done by the Barna

Group shows there is essentially no distinction between Christians and Americans who don’t claim the faith. What does that say about us? Scripture says do not let your culture to define your life – let God do it. Let God transform your thinking, no matter what your age.

The best place to start learning about faith, then, is where we see no future possibilities ahead. If you cannot see what God has for you don’t despair. It’s a good place to start because God wants to help us know who he is, that he is a God of power and a God who creates things out of nothing. Let’s look at God’s call to Abram. Listen to these verbs.

- I will show (you the land)
- I will make (you a great nation and make your name great)
- I will bless (you so you will be a blessing to all families)
- I will curse (those who curse you)

These great blessings got Abram’s attention. It mobilized him.

What if Abram had not acted in faith? What would that look like? He would have ignored seeing God, denied visible evidence of God; he would have ignored hearing his voice. He would have to resist moving; to have said, “I like it here, I’m staying. This is the center of civilization, not some outpost called Canaan. I don’t see how a nation can be built there. He would have focused on the fact that there was no potential for human beings to make anything happen. He would have focused on what he saw.

What about you? Are you focused on what you can see? Or do you think, *it might be really good if God’s involved*. Do you see God as calling you to experience his power in unexpected places that give you a future? What about for this church? Are you full of expectation? Do you see God’s call for a future here? Look for God’s call, not the human potential.

When we are in the place where we see no potential, instead of seeing it as a scary place, let’s see it as a good place to be. It’s an expectant place and as Abram left, he was full of expectation and it just permeated others and they went with him.

Abram was not living autonomously. He wasn’t the king of his castle. He knew he embarked on a journey in which God would be leader as God traveled with him. He didn’t choose a path and then seek God’s approval. He trusted the divine choice was just right for him. He had confidence God could be trusted to bless him.

Living by faith means God chooses our path, not us. We don’t live autonomously. We must trust the path will be right for us. We must have confidence God can be trusted to lead us.

It is at this point you might want to argue with the story, argue about the obstacles. Our obstacles often stop us cold from having faith. Perhaps that’s because we feel we need to at least have something for God to work with. But God does not depend on our potential for success. God himself has the power necessary to accomplish God’s purposes in us, just as he had the power to begin a nation through a couple who had no hope of children.

God says, just take a risk and obey, trusting God calls things into existence that are simply impossible. Don’t let doubt and fear rule. Follow Abram and go.

For Abram teaches, abandon yourself to God and relinquish your past. Look forward, because the summons is to a promise. Can you see it?

God’s way is the way of faith. That is our story because it is still God’s call to each of us and to all of us as the church.

Do we genuinely want to move out of barrenness? Faith is God’s lifestyle for us. God will walk us out of barrenness into great fruitfulness and blessing. Do you trust this word? It’s trustworthy. Look at the person on your left and on your right; they are the offspring of Abram.

When I gaze into the night skies and see the work of your fingers; the moon and stars suspended in space . . . as I begin to hear your voice, a prayer escapes my lips – *I will go*.