



The Nourishing Vocation Project

Engaging the Living Word

Abraham and Sarah - Genesis 12:1-9

What is this particular text?

- Story
 - Ancestral story
- Theology
- Promise
- Transition (before Abram and after Abram's call...)

How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Fulcrum text
 - Human beings rebel
 - God continues to bless
- Watershed
- "lynchpin of the Bible" – beginning of new kind of stories to reconstitute a broken world
- The whole biblical story going forward is different, focused after Abram's call
 - Themes are the same: creation, rebellion, redemption
- Beginning of a new beginning
- God has a new strategy
- Beginning of a long term God-project
- It's about Abram and Sarai – but it's about so much more

How can this text function in the church today?

- Invitation to consider the church's call
- Where/how is God calling us to go?
- What is God calling the church to leave behind?
- What are the promises of God that sustain the church in our "going from..." today?

What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- Raises a lot of questions
- Makes me uncomfortable
- Fills me with a sense of awe that Abram actually went
- Makes me a little uncomfortable – is it exclusivism or inclusivism

What do you have to say to the text?

- Audacious promise/audacious action
- It is hard to believe that they actually went
- Is this a theological telling of a humanly forced migration?
- I want to hear Sarai's voice

What do you see through this text from the story itself?



- Promise giving is accompanied by leave-taking
- God acts without human permission

What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)

- Watershed time in the church - call to do something new
 - Racism can no longer be ignored
 - Current systems are proving to longer be functional
 - Church is being called to leave behind systematic ways of being and doing that perpetuate white supremacy
 - Church is being called to new ways of being as communities of well-being
 - The call of God to leave behind and go to new places is coming from
 - the Gospel itself
 - Young Adults
 - BIPOC siblings
 - 2SLGBTQ+ siblings
 - Those disenfranchised with institutional religion
- Crises of our current time
 - Ideologically divided society
 - Guns/violence
 - Racial disparity/injustice/reckoning

What do you see within yourself?

- Times when God has called me to leave everything behind
- Times when the call has been frightening

What is the context – textual and historical?

- Follows creation
- Follows fall
- Follows Noah
- Follows Babel
- Preamble/prelude/precursor to Jesus

What questions does this text raise for you?

- What about Sarai? What was her take on all of this? How would she tell this story?
- Were they excited, afraid, resigned?
- Why Abram and Sarai?
- Was it easy or hard for them to leave?
- Did they hesitate at all?
- What was the most difficult for them to leave behind – land, kindred, father's house?
- What did they think this was all about?

What words/themes seem of particular import?

- Call



- God chooses and directs
- Promise
- Leave-taking
- Setting out into the unknown
- Obedience

What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?

- God's chosen people never exist in isolation
- It's always about us – and more than us
- God will bless
- God does promise
- God has a vision beyond what we can see
- God's vision see beyond impediments (i.e. Abram is old; Sarah is barren)
- Call to leave behind an old life and look forward to a future not yet seen
- By God's call, we are set free to journey into *new territories, new promises, new hopes, new lives*
 - *And in all things, God goes with them*
- The promises are unilateral – they flow from God to Abram and Sarai
- The promises are unconditional – God says "I will do this"
- God's blessing is both specific to us – and universal

What is the as-over-againstness of this text?

- It was only a promise ... there was no certainty that God would keep up God's end of the bargain
- There were impediments – Abram's age; Sarai is barren; how will God actually give them the land
- There is much that Abram and Sarai must leave behind
 - Country
 - Kindred
 - Father's house
 - He goes out into nothing ... with nothing
 - What was left behind was crystal clear ... what lay ahead was distressingly devoid of detail
 - *What are you called to leave behind in your own life or in your own congregation?*
 - *It's a "leave everything behind" kind of word*

Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?

- God calls – unconditionally
- God promises – unconditionally
- God goes with into the *new territory, new promise, new hope, new life*

What have others said about this text?

- ["In this chapter](#), one only sees the uncertain beginnings of a family who find themselves at the threshold of a new tomorrow." Juliana Claassens, Professor of Old Testament, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, South Africa
- ["YHWH acts in a new way](#). YHWH now calls a foreign man, Abram ("mighty father" or "father of many"), to enact the work of God. Rather than speak to the mass of humanity, expecting them all to do YHWH's will, YHWH now chooses one person through which YHWH will attempt once



again to effect the divine work in the world.” “Abram Went: Reflections on Genesis 12:1-4a,” by John Holbert

- [“Because call isn't always comfortable.”](#) And when God calls us to something, God doesn't promise it will be easy... usually it involves getting stretched and pulled out of our comfort zone and most of the time, well past where we thought we were capable of going.” “Abraham Series Part 1- Step By Step,” by Linda Pepe, Pastor of First Baptist Church, Moorestown, NJ.

What will I teach or proclaim?

- God called Abram and Sarai; God has called you
- Abram and Sarai left everything behind to journey into the future that God has in mind; God calls you to do the same
- There will be struggles
- There will be unknowns
- There will be twists and turns along the way ... (be specific in naming what those twists and turns are, depending upon your context)
- God still calls today ... ongoing discovery of your understanding of self and call ...
- God will go with you through it all
- You may wonder – what am I doing here?
- You will wonder – what am I supposed to do with my life? What am I supposed to do in this moment?
- You will wonder – who is God calling me to be (over and over again)
- You will ask – *why am I here – why are we here* - on this planet at this time in history, and why am I, are we, are here in the particularity of each time and place – God will be present with you to help you figure it out ...
- At this beginning you are being called into a new territory, a new promise, a new hope, a new life ...