

Readings Gen 12:1-9 & Rom 4:13-25

**A sermon preached at St. Michael and All
Angels Church, Sandhurst on 11th June 2203**

“Call of Abraham” – Start of Sermon Series

Today we are starting a sermon series looking at Abraham and his family.

Our story starts in Genesis 12 and will end in Genesis 24. Our sermons will not cover all the chapters and stories so I would encourage you to read the other chapters and passages about Abraham and his family.

Abraham is one of the Patriarchs or Fathers of the Faith. He is married to Sarah, his half-sister who is one of the Matriarchs or Mothers of the faith. Abraham and Sarah and their family lived in the period we know as the Bronze Age around 1900 BCE.

So why are we looking at someone who lived in the Bronze Age and why is he and his family so important.

During the course of this sermon series we will discover various aspects of his and his family's story that tell of his faithfulness to God in different situations. In the New Testament, in St. Paul's letter to the Galatians, we are told

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that everyone who has faith are children of Abraham.

So let us find out some more about Abraham and his family.

Abraham at this point in the story is known as Abram and his wife is not known as Sarah but instead Sarai. However in this sermon I am going to continue to use the names Abraham and Sarah.

Abraham had two brothers called Nahor and Haran. Haran had died leaving behind a nephew called Lot and some nieces who are unnamed in the bible. When we first meet Abraham and Sarah they don't have any children and are not young. This is a common occurrence in the bible, we meet women who are childless, but have a critical role to play and become mothers after the intervention from God, the women have fascinating stories and they range from Sarah in Genesis to Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist in Luke, but I digress, back to Abraham.

A few years earlier Abraham's entire family, including his father had already moved a great distance from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran which is a distance of about from Switzerland to here. While they stopped and stayed at Haran for a period of years, this was

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not intended to be their final destination, they had originally intended to move to Canaan.

It is probably worth noting that the culture and the people would be classed as more nomadic than our lifestyle. Abraham's father had since died.

Now we have our Old Testament reading –
“The Call of Abraham” **GENESIS 12:1-9**

The passage starts by God speaking to Abraham and there are two parts to what God says,

Firstly there is a command and secondly there are a series of promises and blessings.

The promises and blessings are

- I will make of you a great nation,
- I will bless you
- I will make your name great so that you will be a blessing
- I will bless those who bless you
- And the one who curses you I will curse
- And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed

All these promises and blessings were given before Abraham set off and obeyed God, but

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there was another promise that he would receive when he reached Schechem (his first stopping point) – the promise of land for Abraham's children

If we look at some of these promises and blessings in detail and see how they came true

Being made a great nation

A nation is more than just a family, it is a society that has its own identity.

A few chapters after our reading in Genesis 15, God tells Abraham that the stars in the sky represent the number of his descendants and just as you can't count the number of stars in the sky equally you couldn't count the descendants of Abraham.

As a reminder at the time that Abraham heard the promise of being a great nation, and when he heard that his descendants would be more numerous than the stars in the sky, he and Sarah were childless and they were not young.

As the story of Abraham develops we discover that Abraham and Sarah will have children and this promise of Abraham being the father of a great nation comes true.

While the nation of Abraham would have started from Abraham's direct descendants it

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would evolve to include everyone who shares the same root of faith, which includes all Jews, Christians and Muslims, Abraham becomes a person who is acknowledged as a main of faith by many families on earth.

The second promise and blessing I'm going to look at is

I will make your name great so that you will be a blessing

God told Abraham that his name would be great and when his name was great he would be a blessing.

Today we are studying Abraham, one of the patriarchs of our faith and in doing so it is safe to say that Abraham's name has become great. The name Abraham is mentioned 73 times in the New Testament. Jesus himself refers to Abraham and his faith. The majority of times that Abraham is mentioned in the New Testament is as an example of Abraham's faith, as someone who heard God and responded and remained faithful. This is illustrated in our New Testament reading from Romans, where we are told that Abraham was considered as a father figure to those who were reading the letter and this was due to his faithfulness to God.

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Abraham's name means "Father is Exalted". Although in our passage today Abraham didn't have any children, Abraham and Sarah went on to be the parents of a great nation.

Abraham didn't always get it right, he wasn't perfect but he is mentioned throughout the bible in both the Old and New Testament.

If we turn now to the second part of the message from God which is the command that God gave Abraham

GO: and I will show you the way

You may also notice that this is quite light on details,
God didn't tell him where he was going,
God didn't tell him what he would do when he got there,
God didn't tell him how long he would stay there, just GO.

However this doesn't stop Abraham. He responds and in doing so he obeys God. No ifs, no buts, no putting it off for another day.

He just packs up, and goes, taking his wife, nephew, and all their possessions which included other people. Abraham and his family didn't travel light!

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Abraham's response to God's command not only affected him but also other people. He didn't let that deter him, he obeyed God.

While the instructions from God told Abraham to leave his family it does not mean that he would have set out alone, instead it meant that he would have to leave his wider family and only taking his wife and those who are dependent on him with him. By travelling with others, not only would there have been an increased degree of safety but also it was part of God's plan. God had told him that he would be made into a great nation. The implication and while not clearly stated is that Abraham would father children

However when he set out he did not know his destination. The routes that they would have probably travelled along would have been well travelled, they were the trade routes,

Abraham and his party reached their first destination of Shechem which was several hundred miles from their starting point (about the distance from Sandhurst to Inverness). We know that Shechem is in the land of Canaan and was occupied by Canaanites. We also know that there was a large tree called "Oak of Moreh" which is similar in shape to the Oak trees we know but is a different species and is known as the turpentine tree.

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This would have provided much needed shade for the community and any visitors.

When they reached Shechem; they were instructed by the Lord to Stop. As part of the command telling them to stop, God gave Abraham a promise that the land of Shechem would be given to his children. As a reminder, at this time, Abraham and Sarah did not have any children.

Not only did they stop, They built an altar to the Lord.

By stopping and building the altar, this was not just a task they did, they continued to demonstrate their obedience to God's commands and their faithfulness to God.

Shechem was not to be their final destination as they had to move into the hill country and settled in an area which didn't have a name as it referenced in its location to two other towns, Bethel and Ai. . They stopped and obeyed God and built another altar.

After this, Abraham moved yet again towards Negreb. This is where our passage ends

Throughout the passage we see that God speaks to Abraham; That Abraham listens to God and that Abraham obeys God. Abraham

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was willing to obey and travel hundreds of miles with his family not knowing their destination or what would happen, they obeyed God and kept faith with God.

As we explore Abraham and his family over the next few weeks let us remember these main points

Abraham heard God
Abraham obeyed God; He got up and went where God told him to. He changed his life.
Abraham was faithful to God

Abraham is an important figure, the reason he is so important is because of his obedience and faithfulness to God. We have only seen one example of this morning but through the story of Abraham, while there are instances where Abraham gets things wrong, when asked by God to do something, he does it, he remains faithful to God.

Abraham obeyed God he answered Him when he called. God's call on his life changed both him and his family, he didn't know what the future would hold and how God's plan would unfold, all he did was follow God.

As we sit let us pray:

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*Lord your summons echoes true when you but
call my name.*

*Let me turn and follow you and never be the
same.*

*In Your company I'll go where Your love and
footsteps show.*

*Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and
you in me.*

Words: John L. Bell & Graham Maule