

Sermon Notes

Date: 03/05/2023

- Quotes
 - And not to put too fine a point on it, but Jesus said that “you will know the truth and the truth will set you free”. Interestingly enough he didn’t say “you will know the morals and the morals will set you free” Nadia Bolz-Webber



Scripture

- Now 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. **2** 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. **3** 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 shall be blessed.”^[a]
- **4** So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

What then are we to say was gained by^[a] Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? **2** For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. **3** For what does the scripture say? “Abraham

believed^[b] God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” 4 Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. 5 But to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. **15** For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

16 For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, **17** as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”), in the presence of the God in whom he believed,^[a] who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Thoughts

Christians, for a large part of our history, have believed that because we are Christians we have natural rights to certain things. Conquistadores went forth with the promise of claiming land for God, Glory, and Gold, and I don't think the list was ordered to place the most important thing first.

Our promise depends on faith and rests on grace. What is our promise? Is it the descendants that number the stars? Is it the land that God promised, the land that was occupied by others?

Does the promise of Abraham mean that Israel has the right in regards to Palestine, how do we unpack that issue? In my Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, the scripture in Genesis is to be looked at through a lens of worship in 2000 BC. Apparently it was common for there to be multiple gods, and these gods needed to be flattered and cajoled in order that they might help the people in times of need. The gods were seen as having human needs and desires. “The Lord provides for Abram and protects him, while obedience and loyalty are expected in return. One major difference, however, is that our clearest picture of the personal god in Mesopotamia comes from the many laments that

are offered as individuals seek favors from the deity or complain about his neglect of them. There is no hint of this in Abrams' approach to Yahweh. Abram maintains an elevated view of deity that is much characteristic of the overall Biblical view of deity that it is of the Mesopotamian perspective”

In a way, leaving the land in which he resided was a breaking with the old gods and old ways, as gods were geographical in nature. By moving into a new land, Abram was signaling his covenant and promise to God. He was giving up his old ways and his old religions and was entering into a new world, one which was monotheistic. It was a relationship of trust. Abram was leaving the ways of his ancestors and committing to God and God alone, and the generations to come after Abram.

A Greek proverb says “A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in”

Abram was the old man planting trees, and to do so he had to place all his trust and hope in God and this one God alone. His household gods, his security, he had to leave it all behind and step out in faith.

So, in Romans, when it was written that “the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham” The authors are speaking of the uncertainty of stepping out in faith. They are speaking of the fact that it is less about the promise and what it means to be given such a thing, and more about what is required of both parties. We must have faith. We must rely on God wholly and completely and know that the relationship with God is the thing which matters most, the thing that will grow and sustain us.

Paul believed that the descendants of Abraham were spiritual descendants rather than ethnic descendants. In this way, all who in God and Christ as God's son were a part of the promise God made to Abraham, a promise based on faith rather than a physical law and a particular physical space.

Sermon Outline

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- Lent is hard for everyone, especially pastors
 - And this week was super hard for me because why Abraham and Paul?
 - Every week, when I preach, I do this. I look at the lectionary, I stress, I study, etc... and I try to work it together, but most of the time it only comes together either late Saturday night, or while I'm in the shower on Sunday mornings. It all clicks. That's what happened this week. So, I'm going to lay it out, the click thing, and I think that will get us where we want to go. It all begins with a song that's been stuck in my head and plaguing me this week. Pink's, It Hurts to Be Human.
 - Because it does hurt, doesn't it.
 - And then I think about the history of God, and God's relationship to us. It's always been about how we hurt.
 - History lesson time!! Adam and Eve - Cain and Abel. Is God all knowing and all powerful and all seeing. Abram. Exercise with Abram and closing our eyes.
 - Humans took that covenant and they did what we always do. We make it into law. We try to control it. We put fences around it and we make it exclusive, and we hurt ourselves and each other with it.
 - And God saw that. They saw us doing what we always do with it. And God, I think, wanted to understand why. That's how we get Jesus
 - Humanity hurt Jesus, again and again, and he was alone in it. Humans made sure he was alone. We see it again and again, he is misunderstood, misnamed, and betrayed, even by his best friends.
 - And then we killed him. But God saw this and they showed us that no matter how much we hurt ourselves and each other, we don't have the final say
 - So journey with Christ, with yourselves, with each other this Lent. Let yourself lean into the hurt and the pain. Feel it. Listen to the song and meditate on it. And then remember, that the hurt doesn't have the final say, Easter is coming.
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