



KIAMA ANGLICAN CHURCHES

Sermon:

“CALL and COVENANT”

Genesis 11:27-12:9

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Five Prayers

Teach me

"Lord, preach to me in order to preach through me."

Lead m

"Lead me in each moment of study. I need to sense your presence at every point in my preparation time."

Anoint me

"When I finally step into the pulpit, anoint the delivery of this message."

"When I stand up to preach, do what I can't. Bridge the gap. Fill what is lacking."

Prepare them

"Lord, prepare their hearts ... to hear your voice."

Change us

"Lord, change us together..."

AIM

to humble the sinner

to exalt the Saviour

to promote holiness;

Shai Linne:

Whatever the text

Faithfulness demands

that we should hear the echoes

of nails hitting his hands.

The Passage

Genesis 11:27-12:9

27 This is the account of Terah's family line.

Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot.

28 While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth. 29 Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milkah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milkah and Iskah. 30 Now Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive.

31 Terah took his son, Abram, his grandson, Lot, son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law, Sarai, the wife of his son, Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.

32 Terah lived 205 years and he died in Haran.

Genesis 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

2 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

9 Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

THE SERMON

Introduction

Today is Anzac Day, the day we remember the sacrifice of the soldiers, sailors and airmen, the servicemen and women who have fought in our country's wars.

Specifically, the day is tied to the landing at Gallipoli in Turkey on April 25th 1915 of Australian (and New Zealand) Troops as they entered the fray of World War 1. It has been said that that day was the 'birth of our Nation' - the day we recognised that we were 'Australia' and Australians. This is a very significant anniversary – a day of immense significance in our nation's history and in the history of many of our families.

As we turn to the Bible and our new series of sermons/studies, we turn to a day which, in cosmic terms, is also the birth of a nation or the birth of a Kingdom which, in cosmic terms, is far, far more significant than Anzac Day. On this day the world changed.

If you can think back to our series on Genesis 1-11 a couple of years ago, we saw that God made the world and humankind and not long afterward it all went wrong as Adam and Eve rebelled against God's good rule, basically saying, "We want to make the rules".

Subsequent events then developed the consequences of that rebellion as men and women became increasingly evil, until they attempted to build a tower up to God and to remain together when God had told them to 'fill' the earth. God, in Genesis 11, acted to confuse their languages and thus scatter people all over the earth. It is all rather bleak!

At every sinful episode God acts in judgement and grace... But at the end of the Babel incident you are left with the question, 'what is God going to do?' Mankind's rebellion is endemic – built in – seemingly condemned to keep getting worse and worse.

BUT in this series, we see the beginning of the light, the initiation of the process that will, in God's good time, see the reversal of the effects of sin, the payment of the price of sin, and the salvation of all those who will turn to God in faith through the work of Jesus Christ.

So let's meet Abram; he becomes Abraham later in the story...

I have four headings:

Meet the Family

On the Road

Promise, Promise, Promise

On the Road Again

Meet the Family Genesis 11:27

This is the account of Terah's family line. This is consistent with the rest of Genesis which follows the family lines. We have had:

(Creation by God, out of nothing, by his word)

Adam's Descendants

Noah's Descendants

Shem's Descendants

And now Terah's descendants.

And one in particular Abram/Abraham

(The book will then continue with Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph)

Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. ²⁸ While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth. ²⁹ Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milkah; she was the daughter of

Haran, the father of both Milkah and Iskah.

The account begins with a family tree of sorts...and a reminder of how fragile life was in those days.

³⁰ Now Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive.

Then comes the crunch of this part of the story. Sarai (later Sarah) could not have kids. Put quite bluntly – she was not able to conceive. This forms a very important backdrop to the rest of what we will look at in regard to this family. It seems that there will not be an ‘account of Abram’s family line’.

On the Road

31 Terah took his son Abram, his grandson, Lot, son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law, Sarai, the wife of his son, Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there.

32 Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.

This household, these people, this family move out from Ur to go to Canaan but for whatever reason they only get as far as Haran.

And it is in Haran that the important, vital and earth-shattering part of this story takes place...

Promise, Promise, Promise

Genesis 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

Note that the passage says the LORD had said. This is explained by Stephen in his speech in Acts 7:2 ... *The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, ...’*

Abram is already on this journey but at this point are stalled at Haran.

It is worth spending a couple of moments considering why God chose Abram - why speak to him, why call him, what was special about this man? The answer is nothing – Abram has nothing special to commend him. We also note that Joshua 24:2 informs us that in Ur this family

worshipped other gods. So, here is an ordinary, city dwelling, idol worshipping Mesopotamian. And, further, Sarai was unable to conceive. It seems this family is going nowhere. God simply chooses and says, “GO!”

It is at this point that the first of the promises comes to light...

LAND – Abraham is being directed to a land. It’s all very vague at this point; inevitably we will come back to this.

2 “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

Secondly, he is to become a great nation; the second element of the promises...PEOPLE. We will note that Abraham is already head of a significant household of people but this will be more specific – his descendants will be a great nation. But isn’t there a presenting problem? Sarai is barren...can’t have kids!

Then...

3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;

and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

And thirdly abundant BLESSINGS. Abram will be blessed

Five times in two verses the word ‘bless’ (in various forms) insists that the Lord is going to shower his goodness upon Abram, and though troubles were sure to come for him as for everyone else, if God was for him, all would ultimately be well.

Two aspects of this blessing, land and descendants, had already been named. Life in the garden defines what blessing looks like and it has spiritual, emotional, psychological, as well as material aspects to it. And will be a blessing. Those who oppose him will be cursed by God...and finally the blessing will flow out – to all peoples on the earth.

Humanity is under a curse – Genesis 3 makes that abundantly clear; here is the ‘antidote’ or ‘vaccine’ for the curse – the blessing that will flow from Abram.

So in broad stroke we have three promises made to Abraham
Land – that God is going to show him.

People – a great nation – Not merely a family, or a household or a tribe
– but a nation.

Blessing – God’s good favour.

On the Road Again.

4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him;

Abram WENT. Abram is obedient. He goes! This is a very significant thing to do.

Note 12v1 leave **your country, your people and your father’s household.**

These are concentric circles moving into the most intimate connection: I want you to leave your homeland, your country; and then your relatives, your kindred, life as you know it; and then even leave your own father’s household.

He is leaving many of the support structures of family that facilitate the type of nomadic life he is leading.

...and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. ⁵ He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

The rest of the family (except for Lot) are left behind and Abraham ups stakes, tents, furniture, possessions, people, camels. sheep, cattle etc etc etc and goes!

6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

At the tree of Moreh at Shechem Yahweh, the LORD, further elaborates the promise of land. The land of Canaan – this is the ‘promised’ land. But Canaanites are already there - another seeming obstacle to what God is promising.

Abram builds an altar there – basically a pile of rocks - for the purpose of worship.

8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

And then on to near Bethel where he again builds an altar. I think the altars are a sort of way of pegging out the land, a subtle way of staking a claim. And thus of accepting that what God has promised, God will do.

9 Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

And onward to the Negev, the southern extremity!

Conclusion

I have two areas of application.

The first Relates to the Promises..

If you belong to Jesus, you sit here as part of the fulfillment of these promises, these ancient trustworthy promises.

Graeme Goldsworthy helpfully puts them like this:

People – refers to God’s people, those who by faith relate to God through Jesus – whether Old Testament or New Testament saints

Land – is God’s place. It can be a physical place and it will be a physical place but it can also be the place where God rules, where his Lordship is acknowledged.

Blessing – is the rule of God – be obedient to God, placing yourself under Jesus, or Yahweh’s, rule is blessing.

Galatians 3:29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Father Abraham had many sons and you are one of them (be you son or daughter). But only on the basis of the one physical descendant of Abraham – Jesus, who is called the Christ.

Abram was promised Land - We look forward to the coming day when Jesus' Kingdom is visibly established but we live in his land when we seek to live as citizens of his kingdom.

Abram was promised People/Descendants - and we are part spiritually of that vast group of people. We are Abraham's sons and daughters.

Romans 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Abram was promised Blessing - and through Jesus Christ's death on the cross we receive the ultimate blessing of all – the forgiveness of sins which brings us into friendship with God – reconciliation with the one who made us. And ultimately the full blessing of abundant, eternal life.

2 Corinthians 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

This is God's Grand Plan. We are called to join in the plan and acknowledge the Lord.

These promises have the same hold over you as they did for Abraham – they require obedience to the commands of the Promise Maker.

So to our second point of application ...

The Second Relates to Abraham...

What can we learn from him?

This will be a question we are asking again and again as we proceed through these 9 studies.

Walton (NIVAC): *"Yahweh makes the covenant initiative offer to Abram (12:1–3), in which he asks Abram to choose.*

He must decide whether to abandon his land in favor of the land Yahweh offers.

He must decide whether to abandon what family he still has in favor of the family Yahweh promises (against all logic, given Sarai's infertility).

He must decide whether to set aside his blessing, his inheritance, for the inheritance Yahweh describes.

The initiative offers much, but its cost is significant. Abram must trust Yahweh to deliver what he has offered in order to give up so much that Abram already has to gain."

But how is Abraham an example for us? We will see as we go through that he is not always a positive example – the text basically screams to us, don't do what he did! (One of those occasions we will see next week.)

But here we have a positive example. God says, "GO!" and Abraham does; he packs up and leaves – first it would seem from Ur and then from Haran. Abram knows the proper response to God's promises and his choice is obedience. He goes – not know where he is going.

In other words, better to go with your eyes closed, holding the Lord's hand, than to go with your eyes open in your own strength.

There are obstacles - *There's people in the land and there's no people in Sarai.*

This is an act of faith. If you belong to Jesus...if you belong to Yahweh, the God of Abraham, you too are called to GO in some sense...to leave the comfort of the comfortable, the familiar, the safe, convenient and serve God wholeheartedly. It may not (and often doesn't) mean that you have to pack up all your belongings and move to another state, another country, another job, another cultural group. But for some it does.

But we all need to GO in some way – to do the will of God. To live for him in whatever circumstances we are in, or whatever circumstances

he calls us to. We should be asking ourselves continually – Where does God want me to GO and am I willing to GO?

Further Abram knows that the proper response to God is always worship. Notice what he does at each (many) of the places he visits - he builds an altar – presumably offers sacrifices to God (the culturally appropriate way to worship in the ANE). So too we are to worship – to give Jesus the glory and the acknowledgement he deserves and demands...not merely in services in special buildings, but in service to Jesus in everything we do - work, play, rest - whether the circumstances are comfortable, uncomfortable or outright difficult – we should be giving glory to Jesus.

And never forget...

2 Corinthians 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.