

Blessed To Be A Blessing (Genesis 12,15,17)

Intro:

I. Why The Old Testament?

- A.** We are a church that wants to “take it to the streets” so why are we starting a several week long look at the Old Testament?
 - 1.** Isn't this collection of books dusty, outdated, and worn out?
 - 2.** Shouldn't we be concerned only with those things written on this side of the cross (with some of the stories of Jesus added)?
 - 3.** How can these stories of ceremonies, wars, violence, passion, anger, and praise help us?
- B.** There is a serious danger in trying to understand the NT without knowing the OT.
 - 1.** It divorces Jesus' teachings from the centuries that led up to his arrival. It makes Christians orphans, without heritage.
 - 2.** It leads to utopianism. (behold the goodness and severity of God)
 - 3.** It makes some books of the NT (like Hebrews, Jude, Revelation) completely shut off to us as they use OT images, arguments, and allusions to make their points.
- C.** In the NT we learn that Jesus loves us and cares for us. That is most wonderful news! Yet, in the OT we learn something we needed to understand first: this earth does not and never will revolve around us. It is God's world, not ours.
- D.** In a world that demands that things occur in a timely, organized, logical manner we learn (in the OT) that God moves slowly, unpredictably, and paradoxically. As the song says, “God is his own interpreter and He will make it plain.”
- E.** In a world that celebrates celebrity, God shows us in the OT that He has a different view. In the story of the birth of Moses, God identifies by name the two Hebrew midwives who helped save Moses' life... but not the name of the ruling Pharaoh. Historians think that of all Israel's kings, Omri was the most powerful and one of the most influential. God gives him eight verses.

F. We learn that God reversed religion. In other faiths, their god cries and it rains on earth. He gets mad and lightning strikes earth. In the OT we learn that God listens to us, then acts. And He acts through us and with us... but it is still His world.

II. the Modern Story of Abraham

- A. There are patterns in the OT that would give us warning and comfort if we noticed them and took them to heart.
1. God's gift of salvation is found in the middle of judgment.
 2. In and after the Flood. (8:15-19)
 3. After the dispersion of the nations at Babylon (11:1-9), God opens the story of Abraham. (12:1-3)
- B. Blessed to be a blessing. Just as Noah was a blessing in the middle of desolation, Abraham would be a blessing in the middle of times of crisis and confusion.
1. And so were the prophets, kings, judges, disciples, apostles, and you.
 2. Go into all the world... to whom much is given... I send you out like sheep among wolves... let your light shine in the darkness... be a city on a hill... a city of refuge... a sanctuary.
- C. Abraham is a new Adam – a new beginning. We rejoice at the birth of every child for – behold, he makes all things new. God has not given up on us. He has not quitting making us and placing us on this earth.
1. A tree once marked the source of life in the Garden.
 2. Then an Ark.
 3. Now, Abraham and his seed.

III. Our Journey

- A. Canaan is a big place, but only three places are mentioned in Genesis 12:6-9. Shechem, east of Bethel, Negev.
1. These are the same 3 sites in the story of Jacob when he returned to Canaan from Haran (34,35), as well as the sites occupied under Joshua (Joshua 8,10,11).
 2. Learning of God's faithfulness in Abraham's time should help us remain faithful when we don't see the end of the story.
 3. God has been here before. He will walk with us again.

4. Even dreams were there to establish God's will and power in the situation. (Genesis 41:32)
- B.** When God sends us out into the wilds of our own personal Canaan, will we go? Will we fear? Are we afraid that God will not walk with us?
1. God Himself is our shield and reward. (15:1) What do you want to get out of life? Is God your reward? What are you afraid of? Do you trust God to be your shield?
 2. Abraham questions God: is this enough? How? What? It is ALWAYS a question of trusting God, of knowing that He is on the journey with you.
 3. God's answer? "I am the Lord." (the name given to Moses – the unchangeable one)
 4. Walk before me and be blameless (17:1,2). The word "everlasting" is repeated time and again in this chapter.
 5. Sarah's name is changed to mean "princess."
 6. And in the NT? Those who are faithful to the end are promised a crown... just like Sarah.

Once, Abraham fell on his face and laughed. When he got to the point in his life where he just fell on his face and listened, God blessed him – and he was a blessing to us. We are blessed to be a blessing, to walk with God and leave paths so that our children and grandchildren (and our neighbors, and those strange to us) will find their place beside our God.