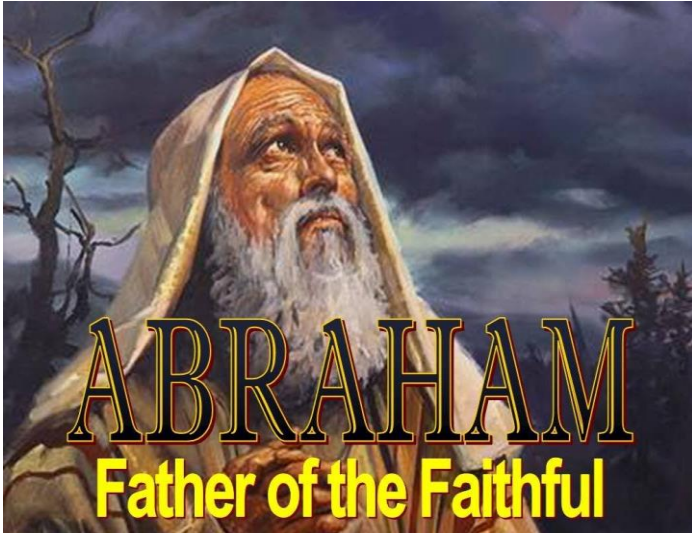


SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUNE 11, 2023



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WELCOME TO ST. JOHN VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Children are not the only ones that have VBS. We might not have snacks every day or learn Bible School songs, but we will be hearing Bible stories and learning about the people who God chose to lead us into people of faith.

Last week we had the story of creation from Genesis 1:1-2:4. This week we will read Genesis 12:1-9, when Abram is called out to begin a faith journey that will make of him and Sarai his wife a great nation to bring blessings to all nations favorable to them and their descendants.

For our Epistle lesson we will hear Paul's explanation of how Abraham is deserving of the title father of the faithful.

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

ONE: God calls us out of places known and secure. God invites us into a living, trusting relationship.

MANY: Happy are those whom God chooses as a heritage. God's counsel to every generation comes to us.

ONE: God continues to bring new worlds into being. God is constantly offering new opportunities to us.

MANY: We are called away from empty pursuits. God wants to employ our talents for the common good.

ONE: Let us worship God with our whole being. Let us use all our talents to praise our Creator.

MANY: Praise God with instruments we have made. Sing praises with voices God has given.

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION:** God Most High, it is hard to hear you calling us, for there are many competing voices vying for our attention. It is difficult to believe your promises because we have been misled by so many empty commitments. We are hesitant to hope for healing and fulfillment amid the living death so many experience in our times. Yet, as we gather here to touch the Unseen Presence, we are moved to rejoice. We stand in awe before

you, eager to live by faith, anticipating your mercy, giving thanks for your word. Amen.

***CALL TO CONFESSION:** How tempted we are to resist the idea that we are numbered among the sinners who need periods of confession. We deplore such thinking as negative, ignoring the positive value of self-examination and penitence. We are more ready to trust our own judgments than to rely on God's direction. Thus we pray:

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

God of justice and righteousness, we come to you as tax collectors and sinners flocked to Jesus long ago. We have wavered in distrust of your promises, yet cling to their truth. We believe that your ways are far more fulfilling than any we can devise, yet we shrink from following where Christ leads. Forgive our pursuit of lesser gods we create, and wean us away from our fascination with the false values that tempt us. Draw us closer to you, we pray. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:** Rejoice, for God gives life to the dead and calls into existence possibilities we could not imagine. Christ died for our sins and rose to new life that we might be justified. Let us explore together what that means in the assurance that God is able and willing to fulfill all the promises made to us. God takes us by the hand and lifts us up to abundant life. Praise God!

***GLORIA:**

Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat two more times.) (end) One God always here. One God always here.

SCRIPTURE READING: Genesis 12:1-9

Abram's family moves to Canaan

12 The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your land, your family, and your father's household for the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation and will bless you. I will make your name respected, and you will be a blessing.

³I will bless those who bless you, those who curse you I will curse; all the families of the earth will be blessed because of you."

⁴Abram left just as the LORD told him, and Lot went with him. Now Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. ⁵Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all of their possessions, and those who became members of their household in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶Abram traveled through the land as far as the sacred place at Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. The Canaanites lived in the land at that time. ⁷The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I give this land to your descendants," so Abram built an altar there to the LORD who appeared to him. ⁸From there he traveled toward the mountains 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 worshipped in the LORD's

name.⁹ Then Abram set out toward the arid southern plain, making and breaking camp as he went.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 33:1-12

Page 643 in the back of the hymnal

EPISTLE READING: Romans 4:13-25

Abraham's promise is received through faith

¹³ The promise to Abraham and to his descendants, that he would inherit the world, didn't come through the Law but through the righteousness that comes from faith. ¹⁴ If they inherit because of the Law, then faith has no effect and the promise has been canceled. ¹⁵ The Law brings about wrath. But when there isn't any law, there isn't any violation of the law. ¹⁶ That's why the inheritance comes through faith, so that it will be on the basis of God's grace. In that way, the promise is secure for all of Abraham's descendants, not just for those who are related by Law but also for those who are related by the faith of Abraham, who is the father of all of us. ¹⁷ As it is written: *I have appointed you to be the father of many nations. So Abraham is our father in the eyes of God in whom he had faith, the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that don't exist into existence.* ¹⁸ When it was beyond hope, he had faith in the hope that he would become the father of many nations, in keeping with the promise God spoke to him: *That's how many descendants you will have.* ¹⁹ Without losing faith, Abraham, who was nearly 100 years old, took into account his own body, which was as good as dead, and Sarah's womb, which was dead. ²⁰ He didn't hesitate with a lack of faith in God's

promise, but he grew strong in faith and gave glory to God. ²¹ He was fully convinced that God was able to do what he promised. ²² Therefore, it was credited to him as righteousness.

²³ But the scripture that says *it was credited to him* wasn't written only for Abraham's sake. ²⁴ It was written also for our sake, because it is going to be credited to us too. It will be credited to those of us who have faith in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was handed over because of our mistakes, and he was raised to meet the requirements of righteousness for us.

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: "Everything Old is New Again"

Beginning last Sunday, our lectionary began the semicontinuous reading from the Old (First) Testament for this season of study and reflection. These lessons take us through the major events in the biblical account of history from the creation of the world to the period immediately following Israel's settlement in the land promised to the ancestors. In hearing these texts read, we may better understand and identify with our roots in ancient Israel's faith.

Our reading last week, Genesis 1:1-2:4a, is the first, but also youngest, of two distinct accounts of creation in the Book of Genesis. The second account begins where the first one ends and continues through the remainder of

Genesis 2. This second account follows with account of the story of the first sins of the first human pair in Genesis 3. It has long been recognized that these very different accounts stem from distinct sources, separated from one another by centuries. Genesis 1:1-2:4a comes from the Priestly Writer in the time of the Babylonian Exile or, more likely, from the postexilic period (538 BC).

Just to explain a little further, when the Jewish population in Jerusalem lost a war with Babylon around 582 B.C., a large number of Judeans were forced to walk to the center of Babylon and they were kept in exile for 43 years. There were a few Jewish families who fled from Jerusalem before the exilic march. They scattered everywhere they could. When we read about the diaspora, that's what it means. All the Jews in many different countries and cities.

Among those who were held captive were the rabbis and priests. They didn't know how long they would be kept in exile or if they would be killed by the Babylonians. The Jewish people were also intermarrying with the Babylonians who worshipped many Gods. The priests were afraid that the Jews would forget their heritage, their religious practices, and their history, so the Priests starting writing everything down, so it would be safe for many generations to come. In 543 BC God saved them from the Babylonians and they were allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

So, to repeat, the Priestly Writers wrote the creation story found in Genesis 1. The other creation story comes

from the Yahwist writing in the time of the Israelite kings, perhaps as early as 900 BC.

It is appropriate that the words of the Priestly Writer's initiate the summary of our reflection on the history of salvation, because that writer's document as a whole presents a carefully organized account of that history. The last sentence of the reading, "these are the generations of the heavens and earth . . ." is a formula for the genealogical expression that recurs throughout the book of Genesis indicating the successive "chapters" in the work; such as the stories about Adam, Noah, and Noah's sons. This priestly account is organized genealogically, chronologically, and also in terms of a series of covenants, or agreements between God and the people, that happened with Noah, with Abraham and Sarah, and with Jacob, leading up to the covenant at Mount Sinai in the book of Exodus, when God again saves the people.

To summarize, the entire First Testament is the story of God's relationship with humans, and the relationship of the people with God. We continue that story even today. God continues to love us, but how much do we love God? Amen

PASTORAL PRAYER:

God of Abraham and Sarah, we rejoice in your promises. Through them, father and mother of many nations, we have come to inherit the gift of faith in you, who makes the dead live and summons things that are not yet in existence as if they already were. Your promises to us are a matter of

sheer grace, which we receive by faith and not by upholding the law.

This morning we lift up all those who do not know how they are loved by you, ever faithful God. May they become curious and reach out to others who can help them get closer to you.

We lift up all those in administration who have the task of caring for all people under their jurisdiction. May they judge fairly and appropriately to all.

We lift up all those friends and family members who are going on vacation this summer. May their journey be safe and may they enjoy time with their children and family. May they enjoy freedom from their busy occupations, and to see God's glorious world of nature.

We lift up all those who are suffering from physical or mental anguish. May they find peace with you and all those who love them and care for them. May all the people affected by weather disasters receive help to get their lives back to some sense of normal. We are thankful for all the first responders, fire fighters, volunteers with different agencies who answer your call to be helpers to those who are affected. We pray all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus, who has taught us to pray . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into

temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE: NCH 774

**Shepherd, lead, lead me in your righteousness,
Make your way plain before my face.
For it is you, God, you, God only,
Who makes me to lie down in safety.**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY: Through our giving to the church, we build altars for the worship of God, not just in sanctuaries made with hands, but in lives enriched by caring and sharing. We bring our offerings in thanksgiving to God, remembering that we are but temporary stewards over all we possess.

***UNISON OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

Thank you, God, for hearing our prayers and restoring our strength. Thank you for drawing us apart from our selfish ways and self-serving pursuits. Let our offering today fulfill your purposes, not ours. Let these gifts summon others to follow Christ. Amen.

Next Sunday we will answer the question of how old is the Old Testament and we'll be introduced to Abraham, the Father of at least 3 religions.

***RESPONSIVE COMMISION AND BENEDICTION:**

ONE: Blessed are the people whom God has chosen. We are inheritors of God's grace and mercy.

MANY: God's counsel is available to us every day. By faith we receive God's gracious promises.

ONE: God sends us to places unknown and full of risk.

The Spirit provides the resources we need.

MANY: We live by hope, even when the way is unclear.

We seek to be faithful to God's intention for us.

ONE: Jesus says to us, "Follow me," and we respond.

Christ answers our needs with a healing touch.

MANY: We are inheritors of God's grace.

Rejoice with us in the blessings God provides.

Amen. **Amen.**