

Genesis 12: 1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4: 1-5, 13-17; John 3: 1-17

Good Morning! Going over today's liturgy, it was clear to me that the common theme is "FAITH". So, what is "Faith"? Here's the biblical definition of faith:

In Hebrews 11:1 - Faith is the confidence in what we hope for and the assurance about what we do not see. So, for us, in the Christian faith, what better place to go but with the story of Abraham, the Father of Faith.

I'm sure that you have heard the story... let's go through some background. Who was Abraham? Abraham lived in Ur, of the Caldees. This is modern day Iraq. He was a prosperous shepherd and a member of a polytheistic family that worshiped other gods. This is who God chose to be the father of faith for not only the Jew but also the Gentile.

In Genesis 12: 1 – 3 the story begins...

12 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.^[a]

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

Notice the words "I will" in God's promises to Abraham. God had promised to be with Abraham; to enable him and Abraham trusted him at his word. The Lord had come to Abraham in a vision. So, Abraham believed God and packed everything up and started on his way not knowing where he was going. By faith he believed God and took the first step. This was the call from God to Abraham.

During their travel God appeared to Abraham again, this time to make a covenant with him. This is referred to as "The Abrahamic Covenant". The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional, everlasting agreement between God and Abraham. Promising him the land of Canaan, numerous descendants and blessing to all nations through his lineage. It serves as a foundational promise for the Hebrews and through Jesus Christ extends to all believers with circumcision as its original sign.

Despite being old and childless, God promised Abraham and Sarah that their offspring would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. By faith Abraham and Sarah left their country and moved to Canaan. During the next 25 years God appeared to him multiple times to reaffirm the covenant. They really needed the encouragement. It's been 25 years and no child, and they were not getting any younger. Finally, the child of promise is born. Abraham is now 100 years old and Sarah is 90. They named the child Isaac.

Do you know why the name Isaac was chosen? When God spoke to Abraham and told him that Sarah would bear a son, Sarah was in the next tent and overheard what God was saying, and she laughed under her breath. Isaac means "laughter". But I digress.

They lived in Canaan for the next 20 years and God appeared to them again, this time to tell Abraham that he would now need to sacrifice Isaac, his only son. God put Abraham to the test to see if Abraham had absolute trust in God's promises. Abraham did not discuss this conversation with Sarah or Isaac.

Abraham obeyed and prepared for the sacrifice as instructed. He and Isaac and two servants went up the mountain. Isaac carried the wood to the altar that had been prepared by Abraham. Now, Isaac became confused and asked his father “where is the sacrifice”? Abraham answered, “God will prepare for us a sacrifice” After binding Isaac and placing him on the altar an angel of the Lord appeared. God intervened and provided a ram instead, so Isaac was spared.

I don’t know if any of us would be able to do what Abraham did by bringing his son for sacrifice, but God knew who to choose. By this act of faith, Abraham would become known as the Father of our faith. God has been calling us to follow him just like he did with Abraham. Have YOU heard his call?

There are many scriptures in the bible that are calling us to follow God. One of these is found in the Gospel of John. John 3:16-17-

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

This verse is so familiar that you even see signs displayed at sporting events proclaiming John 3:16! This is the call from God to all of humanity: to believe in, trust in, to cling to what God did by sending his son; born into humanity, clothed in human flesh to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. To take our place. To pay for our sins, by sacrificing His only son. The Lamb of God that taketh away the Sin of the world. Our call is to believe in Jesus and to follow him. And just like Abraham, we must believe God and heed his voice in the scriptures. No matter our age or our circumstance. We need to “To trust in the Lord with all our heart, leaning NOT to our own understanding, acknowledging him in all our ways so he can direct our path”. That’s what faith is. Taking God at His word. That’s what makes us believers.

The story of Abraham serves as a model of faith for believers today. Demonstrating a life of trust in God’s promises despite uncertainties, trials, and personal imperfections. Abraham’s journey characterized by leaving the familiar for the unknown shows us that faith is often a difficult journey rather than a one-time event.

Are you ready to trust in God as Abraham did and begin your journey of absolute faith and trust? Have you placed your focus on God and what he wants for your life? I pray that we will all renew our faith in God during this time in Lent. Just let go and let God.

Amen.