

Genesis 15:1-6; Psalm 33:12-22; Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40

Grace to you and peace from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

Regardless of what the temperature is outside, it is still summer and many of us either have already gone on our summer vacation, or we're getting ready to go on our summer vacation. There might even be some of us sitting here who are already on their summer vacation. But the thing with vacations, at least from my experience, is if we want to have fun with a vacation, it takes a little bit of planning. We need to figure out where we're going, what we're going to do, what we should take, how much is it going to cost, can we afford to go, can we afford NOT to go. We have to go through all of those things. Occasionally (or very rarely) we might be able to just "get up and go." But that doesn't happen, at least not in the Brock household. For most trips it takes foresight and planning. Now, if someone were to call you out of the blue and say 'I want you to go on a trip with me,' at the VERY least, you would want to know where you were going, how long it was going to be and who else is going on the trip. It is NOT that easy to just "get up and go." Yet, as the author of the letter to the Hebrews reminds us, that is exactly what Abraham and his family did.

Now the story of Abraham and Sarah as it is written in Hebrews, were living in this land far away from where they eventually ended up. But, Abraham was a man of faith and God spoke to Abraham and said, "I have seen your faith, I am going to make of you a great nation." Now Abraham was seventy-five at the time and Sarah was about a decade younger. But God made this promise to them. God not only made this promise that out of them would come a great nation, but God said I am going to bring you to a new land. I am not telling you what it is yet, but I am going to lead you to this new land. And Abraham and Sarah packed up their household, from where they lived, from where they had this thriving businesses. If we were to read through the Genesis' account, we find out all of the camels, horses, donkeys and servants they had to pack up. They get all of these folks packed up and they go on this hundreds of mile long journey. They kind of wander around and it kind of sets the tone for what happens a little bit later with the whole Exodus story. But eventually in all of this wandering around, they do end up in the land that God has promised them.

But until they do, we can tell in the back of Abraham's mind he keeps thinking, "you know God, you said that my descendants would become a great nation. I don't see any descendants yet." As we heard Abraham complain in the first lesson, "I've got to give everything over to my first servant Eliezer." And God says to Abraham, "Excuse me, aren't you listening to me? I promised. I have made with you a covenant, a promise." At that point Abraham was even older and Sarah was past menopause. But God fulfilled that promise. The fulfillment of that initial promise to Abraham and Sarah was their son Isaac. From Isaac came his son Jacob and from his son Jacob came the twelve brothers from four different mothers. And thus began the Nation, the Believers, the People of Israel. Abraham and Sarah didn't know that when they were way east in the land of Ur. They didn't know about their great-great-grandchildren. They didn't really understand this place called Israel. But God said to them, "I am making a promise with you." And so by FAITH, they packed up and left.

Faith is one of those iffy kind of things, isn't it? Those of you who come regularly on Saturdays have met my friend Max Wolfe. Max would say that faith is a lot like a smell, because with a smell; you can't see it, you can't touch it, but you can follow it. We can't **touch** faith, we can't really see faith. We see faith in *action*. Watching Abraham and Sarah get up and leave, is seeing faith in action. But we can't really see, visibly see, faith. As the eleventh chapter of Hebrews started out, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

An example of faith: Last January, Reuters Press had an article about a Moroccan soldier, who after twenty-four years was finally able to marry his bride. The reason it took twenty-four years was that he had been in jail in the Sahara Desert. But he told the Reuters News Service, "I was convinced that my bride would wait for me. I had blind confidence in her since the first day we met." He had been captured by Separatist guerrillas in 1979 during a war for the control of the Western Sahara territory, and he was finally freed in November of 2003. He rushed home to wed his intended, who knew that he had been captured, but had not heard from him for the last six years. She said "I never thought I had lost my husband, I knew he would come back one day." She had faith in their relationship. Just as we are called to have faith in God. We don't see God, but we know God is there. We don't quite understand why sometimes we are called to do certain things, but if we walk by faith, then God uses those things in our lives, to serve our Lord, to help each other. We walk by faith. We look for the things that perhaps we will not see the fruition of. Abraham and Sarah did not see the great nation that arose from them. They were long since worm food by the time the twelve brothers were born. Yet they knew that God would fulfill that promise.

One last example about faith. There is a story concerning Walt Disney -- Yes, THAT Walt Disney. After the success of Disneyland, and he saw the ensuing profiteering that went on by others around that park, he came up with the idea for Disney World. That Disney would own the park AND the surrounding land so that they could have the hotels and the restaurant and to make the whole "Disney experience" more enjoyable. So Disney purchased land; they purchased a great deal of land in central Florida. Plans were drawn up and construction began, but unfortunately, Walt died before Disney World was completed. At the opening of the park, one of the folks attending there commented that 'wasn't it sad that Walt wasn't alive to see this.' And his nephew, who was running the business at the time, is reported to have replied, "you're wrong. He DID see it, if he hadn't seen it, we wouldn't be standing here today."

We gather **here** today because someone, some *ones*, in our past, saw fit to continue. Someone -- maybe we're related to them, maybe we're not -- had the FAITH to go forward. Not only to build THIS place, this brick and mortar place, called Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, but to go forward in faith to bring the faith of their parents, the faith that they had learned, to a new generation. Perhaps they lived long enough to see the building of this place, perhaps they lived long enough to see the spread of Christianity throughout the country, perhaps they did not. Yet now we are called by faith to continue on. We don't know where that faith will always lead us. It might lead us someplace scary, or maybe it will be a great joy ride. We don't know. But, what we do know, is that the One who leads us, the One in whom we trust, will always be with us as we journey forward in our faith. And so let us, like Abraham and Sarah, trust in God, that we too might walk in faith.

Amen.

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