

Genesis 12:1-9; Psalm 50:7-15

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

Now Abram and Sarai were just a couple of folks living in the land of Ur (it sounds kind of like the phlegm I have in my throat right now) in the Chaldeans. For us, if we think about it since we're learning more and more about the Middle East, if you can picture where the city of Babylon is, Ur is in that general vicinity. So Abram and Sarai are there in the land of Ur, they live there with Abram's father Terah, Abram's nephew Lot (orphaned by Abram's brother Haran), when, more or less out of the blue, at least according to our lesson, the Lord God Almighty calls out to Abram and says to him: Go from your country and from your kindred and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.

How would you like that? How would you like to leave everything that you know, everything you've ever known, all the stuff you thought you were GOING to know and move . . . somewhere? God doesn't tell us **where** to go. What God's saying in the lesson? "Go to the land that I will show you." No address, no GPS coordinates, not even a general direction. "Go to the land that I will show you." Okay, I'm a guy – I don't ask directions. But still when I start to go on a trip I have a general idea of where I am going to go. Not so with Abram and Sarai.

Now an amazing thing to me at least – but maybe that's because I'm too cynical – They get the phone call that they've won the prize, they pack up and go! Without any questions, without any whining, without oh no, 'you've got the wrong guy.' God spoke; and they moved. Now maybe this shouldn't be TOO amazing to us, since, as things turn out, if you happen to turn back to chapter 11, right before our lesson tonight, we find out that Abram is the great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, grandson of Noah. Yes, THE Noah. The guy with the Ark, the Large Boat, not the Indiana Jones Ark. So the Noah, too, took a trip on faith, didn't he? God calls to Noah, build an Ark, no clouds on the sky, no water near by, build an Ark. Noah builds an Ark.

How many of us, here, tonight, would say that we received a call from God. I think I've shared before the story of something that happened to me at seminary. My upstairs neighbor Karen had her study area in her bedroom. She had all of her books there, her computer and her printer were all set up there and one semester toward the end that she was busy trying to get all of her papers, when she fell asleep at her desk, and we had a storm roll through Gettysburg. As is the habit of storms going through often times the power blinked. While Karen was asleep on her desk, the power blinked. Well, fortunately, she had surge protector so her computer just started to go through the reboot cycle as did her printer, and in her DREAM hearing her printer go through the cycle, she thought 'oh, God's sending me a fax.'

Now wouldn't that be wonderful if God actually communicated with us by sending us a fax. We'd have all the written instructions right there in front: 'now let's see, do items, A, B, C, go west 278 miles, turn southwest at the lake to detour through Egypt. When you're finished, go

northeast 147 miles, stop at the plains. Okay, got it God, no problem.’ God doesn’t talk to us like that, at least to the best of my experience, God doesn’t use fax machines. Nor does God use a telephone, and if God did use a telephone, I don’t know that I’d answer, mainly because I have caller id and if I don’t recognize the name or number, especially if it’s an 800, I really don’t answer it. I figure if it is important they will leave a message. But God does call us.

Perhaps the most scary thing though about BEING called is like with Abram and Sarai, we don’t know what the outcome will be. We’re human beings. We WANT to know, don’t we? I have a friend who any time she picks up a mystery novel will read the very last chapter first. Last year, when “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows” came out, how many of us turned and read the epilogue before we started chapter one. We want to know, we want to know the outcome. Abram and Sarai went by faith, and THAT’S really scary.

To go forth by faith, to go with the unknown, the unforeseen as Abram and Sarai did, that’s, well we do always have to deal with the unknown don’t we. Will I pass my final? Will I get my project done on time? Can I get my project done under budget? In years gone by, there were other examples, of mysterious unknown. In the British Museum of London, there is a mariner’s map drawn in 1525, that outlines the North American coastline. And on that map where the cartographer didn’t know what exactly was there, he wrote “Here be giants,” “Here be scorpions,” Here be dragons.” That, sometimes, I fear, how we view our own future. A future full of dragons, scorpions, and giants.

But do we really encounter those fearsome creatures? Now true, we’re looking at rising gasoline prices. At the rate that they’re going, we’ll soon going to be paying the same rate for a gallon of gas that my father-in-law had to do just last month while he was visiting friends in Germany, \$9 a gallon. The weaker dollar and low interest rates may mean that we can’t get that new car, or go on the fancy vacation. Maybe I need to downgrade from the premium cable package down to the standard cable package. Maybe I really DON’T *need* to have satellite radio, AND internet at home, AND a land line, AND cell phones for all of my family members. Maybe it means that I won’t be as comfortable as I **want** to be. But then again, I don’t read in our lesson tonight about Abram and Sarai about how uncomfortable their lives were about to become. They were ripped up from the home, from the land of Abram’s birth.

Now I have lived in several parts of this country, I’ve not lived in the land of my birth for over half of my life and so I realize it’s a little bit difficult for me to relate to that. But then I am reminded of some folks that I have met recently, ‘are you from around here?’ “Oh, no, no, no, we only moved to Mechanicsburg when we got married twenty-six years ago. No, no, I am from Dillsburg.’ It was a fearful thing for them to move from Dillsburg to Mechanicsburg – because maybe there are dragons.

Now that map that I was talking about – eventually came to be in the possession of Sir John Franklin, a British explorer in the early 1800's. Franklin, when he got the map and he read it, scratched a line through the dragons, scorpions, and giants and wrote instead: “HERE IS GOD.”

That wasn’t a concept that was overly familiar to Abram and Sarai. In their day, deities were geographically restricted. Marduk was a god *over* here, Set was god over there, Odin was

somebody way up north. But this YHWH, this Adonai, this Lord God Almighty, calls to Abram and Sarai, tells them to leave everything that they have known, promises to be with them, to guide them and to make of them “a great nation.” God calls Abram and Sarai into the unknown. God calls each and every one of us, especially those of us who bear the mark on our forehead of the cross made at our baptism. We are called. Those of us who are join together in the bread and the wine, in the body and the blood, we are called. We are all called to Love and to Serve and to be a Witness of and to BE the body of Christ in this world.

How, exactly do we do that? Well, now that one I can't tell you. It might be as an ordained minister. It might be that you're called to serve Christ as an office manager, it might be that your called to serve God an automotive technician, or as a doctor, as a lawyer, or custodian. But to know for certain, we have to listen for that call. More importantly we have to answer when God calls. We have to be like Abram and Sarai, knowing that there MIGHT be dragons, and scorpions and giants. But the God who calls us is greater than anything that this world has to be afraid of.

Amen.