

Sermon

For Where your Heart is....

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Bacon Memorial Presbyterian Church

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How can we trust in God when what God is promising seems impossible? This is the situation that Abram or Abraham as we came to know him is faced with. God came to he and Sarah and made a bold promise to an elderly, barren couple. That they would become elders of a great nation – a promise that requires an heir. It is understandable that they are losing hope in this promise given their advanced age of 75 and 65 years respectively. I'll be honest – if God came to me today and told me at my age of 59 that I would bear a child, it would be a clear – “What you talkin bout God!” But there is a promise here and a conversation.

You might interpret Abraham's exacerbation as a lapse in faith but I don't see it that way. I see a man who has trusted God and in his confusion, he returns to God in prayer to better understand his fate, his future. Abraham is honest about things that do not make sense to him. Instead of silently stewing or letting concerns gnaw at his faith, he brings his complaint before God. He dares to hold God accountable. You don't bring a problem to God if you don't believe—trust—that God can do something about it. And God does an interesting thing...he points to the stars.

Under ideal conditions—no clouds, moon, or light pollution, and a full sky view—the naked human eye can see light from just around 3000 stars. Yet

Inspired by workingpreacher.org commentary on Luke 12:32-40 by Rev E. Trey Clark and commentary on Genesis 15:1-6 by Rev John Anderson.

using our own galaxy, the Milky Way, as the model, astrophysicists calculate that a typical galaxy contains at least 100 billion stars. Estimates are that there are around 10 trillion galaxies! This means that in the vastness of space, the universe contains upwards of one-septillion stars—or a “1” with 24 zeros after it! That’s more than 133,000 stars for every grain of sand on earth!¹ No wonder God tells Abram to count the stars ... “if you can.”

A “great nation” would indeed issue from Abram and Sarai. Abram himself will have eight biological sons to his name. His grandson Jacob will be renamed “Israel” (Genesis 32:28) and his wives will birth 12 sons, who become the namesakes for the 12 tribes of Israel. At the start of the book of Exodus, it is said that “the Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them” (Exodus 1:7).

Have you heard about the new planet scientists have hypothesized? Planet Nine is a **hypothesized massive planet**, first proposed in 2014, that is speculated to orbit far out in the solar system. It has not been detected formally. Instead, astronomers have inferred its presence from perceived perturbations of the orbits of some Trans-Neptunian Objects (TNOs).

Now I’m not scientifically inclined to be able to explain to you the significance of this discovery but it seems quite exceptional and incredible. And it also seems a lot like my prayer life. I have hypothesized an outcome to my situation without being able to actually see what it will look like. I have indications that what I believe will be is what God wants for me, but in the end,

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I cannot be certain of how things will turn out – except for one thing. I can be certain that it will be as pure and beautiful as 10 trillion galaxies. I mean, if God has made the massive solar system and all that is in it – even the parts we cannot see or even imagine, then why would I not trust that God can and will provide me all I need on this little old planet we call Earth?

And yet, I still have moments of anxiousness, fear and worry – more than I would be willing to admit from a pulpit. Not knowing what my Planet Nine looks like is daunting at times.

In our gospel from Luke, Jesus brings this idea of the promise of God into a more intimate exchange – I love the tender, gentle opening - *“Do not be afraid, little flock,”* Jesus tenderly assures his disciples. These words come right after his teaching on God’s faithful provision—reminding us that we are not left to fend for ourselves in a world of scarcity and anxiety. When Jesus calls his followers a “little flock,” he’s not just using a poetic metaphor. He’s identifying himself as our shepherd—the one who guides, protects, and lays down his life for us. This image echoes throughout Scripture: from the green pastures of Psalm 23 to the prophetic promises of Ezekiel and the intimate voice of Jesus in John 10. The shepherd is not distant. He is near, attentive, and deeply invested in the wellbeing of his sheep.

But Jesus doesn’t stop at comfort. He invites us into courage. *“It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* What a stunning declaration! God is not reluctant or stingy. God is a joyful giver—a loving parent who delights in sharing the fullness of divine life with us. The kingdom isn’t a prize

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we earn; it's a gift we receive. And it's not just a future hope—it's a present reality. Luke makes clear that the reign of God is already breaking into the world, even as we await its complete fulfillment.

And here's where it gets radical. Receiving the kingdom means stepping into its economy—a way of life that turns worldly values upside down. It's not about personal gain or spiritual comfort. It's about generosity, justice, and solidarity. Jesus calls us to sell our possessions, give to those in need, and invest in treasures that cannot be stolen or spoiled. This isn't theoretical. Luke shows us real people living this out—believers who shared everything so that no one among them lacked (Acts 2 and 4).

So we don't cling to wealth. We don't hoard security. We live open-handed, because our treasure is anchored in God's reign. And that reign always—*always*—makes room for the poor, the oppressed, and the forgotten. That's the kind of kingdom our Father delights to give. That's the kind of kingdom we're called to embody.

We are living in a world where it is acceptable to hoard wealth and some are doing just that and yet I believe generosity is still powerfully strong in our world today. I bear witness to people giving so freely of themselves, of their wealth and of their wisdom.

Abraham did not receive what God had promised – power, wealth and heirs and then not give back to the world from that provision. Answered prayers are beautiful and it feels wonderful when our Planet Nine comes into

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focus, but it serves us in a much broader sense when what we have received – be it resource, wisdom, time, health, love- and then be in a position to be a bright light to someone whose light has gone dim for a bit. To share our experience, to share our strength that we have received from our faith in God, and in God's faith in us – that is where our treasure is. And where our treasure is, there also will be our heart.

Pray like Abraham...with open curiosity and a free spirit to receive whatever message God will give. But be purposeful – tell God your fears, your concerns, and your desires. We are told be ready to receive...to be dressed for action, to keep our lamp lit, and stay alert.

And the reference of a thief entering the house...is yet another way Jesus will enter our lives. If we run in the other direction, if we have not turned to God for help, if we have strayed off our path, Jesus basically says he will break in if he has to...to be sure you know you are loved, know that you will receive guidance and provision. I love how powerful that is!

The word of the day is to be receptive, to be open and know that your Planet Nine is out there – no matter that you can't see it just yet, God has prepared it for you in love and grace so that when you find your planet, you will be prepared to share it with those in need of it. For when we receive from God, anything we share will be returned to us in love and light.

Amen