



“Moving On”

Pastor Andy CastroLang

March 8, 2020

Scripture (CEB):

Genesis 12:1-4a

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

³ I 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.”^[a]

⁴ Abram left just as the Lord told him, and Lot went with him. Now Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran.

Sermon:

“God appears, calling Abram to leave (in increasing level of intimacy) his country, his clan and his home.” Terence Fretheim

Leave your land.

Leave your kindred.

Leave your (father’s) family home.

“For a land that /will show you.”

Leave your country; the national identity you have, the places you know...from the natural wonders of surpassing beauty in your homeleand, and the playgrounds or meadows you played in as a child, to the monuments you grew up surrounded by, to the houses of the rich

and powerful, or the home of your favorite grade school teacher. Leave it.

And leave your great aunts who spoiled you. Your cousins that you would play with on sunny childhood days. Leave the gravestones of your great grandparents, and the house they built, or the quilts they quilted. All that family rootedness that ties you to some particular people. Leave it.

And leave your home. That place that has your pillow and your bed and your room. That place that has the breakfast table, or the lines on the side of the door where you stood to be measured, again and again, as a growing child. The place with the dog, or the cat, that you loved. The trees that you climbed in, or sat in the shade of. That place where you know the pictures on the walls, the furniture that sags or shines just so. That place you called home. Where mother and father, sisters and brothers, were. Leave it all.

This is wrenching. Brutally hard.

This is the plight of millions of people around the world, even as we sit here. Fleeing warfare and famine, the absolute destruction of the places and the people they love...they leave it all.

And here is Abram, with his wife Sarai...moving on, moving out. Leaving. His father has died. His brother has died, leaving an orphan son, Lot. Abram is childless. They had a dream of a new home in Canaan. But that didn't happen either, they stopped in Haran. Did Abram's dad get sick, did his mother die first, then his father? We don't know why they didn't make it where they were going, only that they had started a journey to a new home, and misfortune followed them.

They stopped, perhaps in exhaustion or despair?

Until God spoke to Abram, sending him and Sarai out, again. But this time, unlike that other time, ***God Spoke, and God Promised.***

Promised a future, an amazing future. Full of blessings of progeny, even though we know in the story that Sarai has not been able to have children.

Full of the promise of a great name, and a promise that because of Abram and Sarai, all the people of the world will be blessed.

This is a story of beginnings, too. Genesis is a story of the beginning. But this is a beginning

of a nation; God's people Israel, the name given to the grandson of Abram, after his night of wrestling with God.

While God begins in the particularity of Abram and Sarai, the blessing comes to the whole world, for the whole world.

Blessed by God's people in Islam, and God's people in Christianity. God's people in Shinto, Hindu, Yoruba religion, every religion, every people...blessed.

The blessing is much greater than anything Abram or Sarai ever saw!!

But it is given. In chapter 17 it is confirmed, Abram receives a new name, Abraham, and he is promised that he will be the father of a multitude of nations, more plenteous than the stars of the sky or the sand on the sea.

Now, if we enjoy ancient history this is somewhat interesting. If you are a scripture nerd, it is interesting.

But it is more than interesting to me as a pastor, it is amazing to me to see how what is lost, painfully lost...is not lost forever.

Many of us who sit in here on a Sunday can tell stories of moving on, of being refugees from physical and emotional violence, of spiritual cruelty, of a church landscape, or a place, without hope or promise that we just had to leave; we had to leave!

Unaccepted for who we were: gay or lesbian or trans, divorced, or married to the wrong person, struggling with sickness or addiction, battered by cruelty and hypocrisy, lonely or disillusioned, seeking people of hope, of courage, of joy...we left wherever we were.

It is hard to leave our native land, our kindred, our family home.

But if it is a place of death, if it is a place of horror to us, then go we must.

This ancient tale, is for me, a tale of God's promise to all of us who must go, who wander in hope of finding a new home, with a bright promise to be known somewhere in the future.

Many of you know my personal story of finding my true love, marrying him, and losing our church family, friends, and careers because we married.

Did I mention how many tears we cried, how alone we felt, how our hearts felt like they had

been trampled on, and our spirits were like a dry desert?

We had to go.

And it was hard, and lonely, and wearying at first.

It took years for us to find a new family, a new community that welcomed us and called us in as, “sister”, “brother”, “friend”.

And maybe, that old old promise, to those struggling on a rocky road, far from what was once called home...maybe that old old promise stayed in mind, settled in the heart.

Not alone. God on the road with you. God’s promise within you.

And years and eons later, another One who walked away from his native land of Nazareth and his kindred and family home (son of Joseph and of Mary)...showed us how to be family to one another.

Mark 3:31-35

³¹ Then Jesus’ mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” ³³ And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴ And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

God speaks. God promises. Jesus speaks, Jesus promises.

These are promises that can be trusted.

Yes, there is family, there is home. Somewhere else. You may have to move on. But it is promised. Look for it, walk towards it, believe in it.

It is promised. It shall come.

And you can live in peace of heart, knowing this. Trusting in God’s promises.