



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

**Lent 2 (A)**  
**March 8, 2020**

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

### **Genesis 12:1-4a**

In this passage, we read about the call of Abram. God calls him to take his family and leave his father's house and venture forth into a strange and unknown land. God promises Abram that if he does this, God will make a great nation out of Abram and his descendants and will bless him. Not only that, if Abram responds to God's call, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

God's call to him meant that he had to leave the safety and security of his father's house. He and his family had to travel far away to a foreign land. He didn't even know where God was sending them, but he knew they would be strangers there, and that the land they were entering might be a place where they were not welcome. God was calling Abram to leave behind everything he knew, to take an extraordinary leap of faith, to put his absolute trust in God, and to put himself and his family completely in God's hands. But with that leap of faith came God's promise of blessing beyond measure, not just for Abram and his family, but for the entire world.

Sometimes, God asks us to take a leap of faith. And sometimes, taking that leap means making a change, leaving something behind, some way of living or thinking that isn't working for us anymore. When we encounter those moments, we can choose to stay where we are or we can choose to move out in faith to an unknown land, with the assurance that God is always with us.

- Is there something you might need to "leave behind" in order to respond to God's call?
- How might you share the blessings God has given you so that they could be a blessing for others?

### **Psalm 121**

This psalm contains some of the most beautiful and comforting words for us in times of grief or trouble. It assures us that God is always with us. The language of the psalm conjures up different images of God's protection. First, we might imagine a solitary figure who looks to the hills and is reminded of God as the Creator. Then the imagery shifts to speak of God as a night watchman, one who is charged with staying awake all night to keep the rest of the people in the town safe. It speaks of God as a shade from the heat of day and a shelter in the night. Everything we do, everywhere we go, God is with us – especially in our suffering.

- What do you do to remind yourself of God’s presence in your life?
- When were times you knew that God was watching over you?

### **Romans 4:1-5, 13-17**

Abraham’s faith is again the subject of our epistle reading. Paul points to Abraham as the exemplar of faith. Furthermore, Paul says it was Abraham’s faith, and faith alone, that brought him God’s promise of blessing. By setting up a juxtaposition between the law and faith, Paul does not intend to denigrate the law but wants to demonstrate to his readers the miracle of God’s grace. Paul uses the metaphor of someone who works and is paid wages that are due compared with someone who doesn’t work and is paid wages anyway. This is the way the grace of God works. Paul tells us that God’s promise extends to all people, including those who did not know the law. He shows us that God’s grace is for all people who have faith in God. Through God’s promise of the blessing to all nations, we are all children of Abraham.

God’s abundant love is a gift to all of us, even when we don’t deserve it. No human being is perfect. We all make mistakes. Yet even when we come up short, even when we don’t “do the work,” we can trust in God’s grace and mercy.

- Has there been a time in your life when you have not “worked” but have been “paid” anyway?
- Where have you seen signs of God’s grace in your life?

### **John 3:1-17**

Nicodemus, a teacher and leader of the Jewish community, comes to speak to Jesus in the night. He has seen the signs Jesus has performed in Jerusalem. Nicodemus wants to understand who Jesus is and what he is saying, but he doesn’t want to be seen talking to him. Nicodemus recognizes that there is something special about Jesus and says he has “come from God.” Yet Nicodemus still doesn’t quite get the whole reality of what Jesus is telling him. Jesus is speaking about being “born from above,” but Nicodemus takes him literally. Jesus is speaking about a spiritual rebirth that comes from faith in God. Like the wind, the Spirit is not something that can be controlled or manipulated. It works mysteriously. Nicodemus is searching for concrete answers to his questions, but Jesus seems to be speaking a different language. He challenges Nicodemus to understand that God loves the world so much, that he gave his only Son to save the world.

Sometimes, we can get tangled up in confusing theological questions. Sometimes, we go through times of spiritual wandering in the dark. Sometimes, we just want concrete answers to our questions. Jesus tells us, quite simply, that the answer to all of our questions is love.

- Have you ever felt uncomfortable expressing your faith, your questions, your doubts?
- How do you respond when God challenges you to go beyond your comfort zone?

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