

PENTECOST 2 – PROPER 5

Year A

*This Bible study was written by **Sermons That Work**.*

Genesis 12:1-9a

12 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

⁴So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother’s son Lot and all the possessions that they had gathered and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran, and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, ⁶Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. ⁸From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east, and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord. ⁹And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

Discussion Questions

What beginnings and endings are you anticipating in the months ahead? Will they be stressful, exciting, challenging, hopeful?

How can you remember God’s faithfulness in the midst of struggle? How will you praise him even times of great upheaval?

Commentary from Sermons That Work

Uprooting oneself and one’s family is a difficult and sometimes necessary thing. Aside from the physical work of packing up belongings, marshalling movers or friends, and unpacking, there’s the mental and emotional strain of starting over, of finding new habits, of making new friends, of discarding things that are no longer useful. It can be a great act of faith, even today, to start over.

Our God is alpha and omega, a god not only of endings, but of beginnings. God is present in the stressfulness and pain of endings, promising us blessings even as we feel overwhelmed, hopeless, and tired. Will we receive those blessings of new beginnings?

Psalm 33:1-12

- ¹ Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous; *
it is good for the just to sing praises.
- ² Praise the Lord with the harp; *
play to him upon the psaltery and lyre.
- ³ Sing for him a new song; *
sound a fanfare with all your skill upon the trumpet.
- ⁴ For the word of the Lord is right, *
and all his works are sure.
- ⁵ He loves righteousness and justice; *
the loving-kindness of the Lord fills the whole earth.
- ⁶ By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, *
by the breath of his mouth all the heavenly hosts.
- ⁷ He gathers up the waters of the ocean as in a water-skin *
and stores up the depths of the sea.
- ⁸ Let all the earth fear the Lord; *
let all who dwell in the world stand in awe of him.
- ⁹ For he spoke, and it came to pass; *
he commanded, and it stood fast.
- ¹⁰ The Lord brings the will of the nations to naught; *
he thwarts the designs of the peoples.
- ¹¹ But the Lord's will stands fast for ever, *
and the designs of his heart from age to age.
- ¹² Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord! *
happy the people he has chosen to be his own!

Discussion Questions

What is your favorite line of this psalm? Why do you think it piques your interest?

What do you think it means to be a nation whose God is the Lord?

Commentary from Sermons That Work

We continue the theme of new beginnings in today's psalm. Using our God-given skills, the psalmist asks that we come up with a new song – even though the content of the song is very old indeed. There is nothing novel or new about God's traits, but there is fresh wonder from the writer (and reader) about all he has done for us. Even now, God reacts to the wills of the nations; even now, God thwarts plans; even now, God stands fast – and will continue to do so forever.

Romans 4:13-25

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

¹⁶ For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸ Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So shall your descendants be." ¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), and the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²² Therefore "it was reckoned to him as righteousness." ²³ Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵ who was handed over for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Discussion Questions

What does it mean for God to be father of all of us?

Where have you seen God give life to the dead?

Commentary from Sermons That Work

Our faith is reckoned to us as righteousness, just as was true with Abraham and Sarah, who had every possible reason to distrust God's promises. It is no small thing for us to say the creeds aloud together for this reason – while we too have any number of reasons to disbelieve in God's power loving-kindness, we commit to belief still. Where we fall short in belief, we lift each other up and pray for correction. Where we are strong in belief, we buoy our neighbors. When we disbelieve the promises God has made to us, we remember that he is giving life to the dead and calling into existence things that do not exist.

Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

⁹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax-collection station, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him.

¹⁰ And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² But when he heard this, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

¹⁸ While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” ¹⁹ And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. ²⁰ Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, ²¹ for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.” ²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And the woman was made well from that moment. ²³ When Jesus came to the leader’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴ he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶ And the report of this spread through all of that district.

Discussion Questions

When did you first hear Jesus say, “Follow me”?

Are you ever afraid to hope for healing? Why or why not?

Commentary from Sermons That Work

Yet again, we are called to a new life! Sometimes, the message really is simple; all the artifice, all the grand ideas, all the apologia fall away and we are left with a lone, very real voice: “Follow me.” When we suffer, whatever that might look like, we need only reach for Jesus and a miracle might happen: we just might become whole, healed, and alive once more.