

Luke 12:32-40

Lectionary 19 August 8, 2010

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 and I will make of you a great nation.

And he went.

He let go of the security of a country.

He let go of the security of a large family.

He let go of the security of a home, a place of shelter.

And he went.

He let go of so much because he believed a word of the Lord.

And then.....nothing happened.

It would be like one of you listening to the word of Jesus this morning: Sell your possessions and give alms. What if you believe Jesus word, follow Jesus word. Do Jesus word. And then nothing happened but that you are poor?

Would you still believe the word was for you, to you, or would you begin to think maybe you had been listening in on Jesus' word intended for someone else?

Many years later the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me for I continue childless and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." But the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." He brought him outside and said, "Look toward the heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. So shall your descendents be."

Instead of giving him a son, the Lord promised thousands of sons.

Like telling the poor man he will have riches beyond imagining in heaven.

But then we read, "And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness."

Now I'm not sure just what that means except that Abram got some extra credit with God for his faith. I would think that by now God would have caught on that Abram believed. But maybe Abram had not.

Maybe his leaving home and going to the new land had just been a going through the motions, like praying, asking, but never really expecting God to hear and to bless. Or like giving ten percent of my income for others as a kind of a tax, an obligation with no joy or hope. .

Maybe for Abram the first following of God's word was like coming to worship here because you know you must but not expecting to be made new and alive and full of love here.

But now we read that in seeing the stars and hearing the promise Abram believed and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

St. Paul makes a lot of those very words. Paul says that this is the only righteousness that we can ever have, the righteousness of faith, of believing in God.

Faith is what God wants from us, and in us, and most of all, for us. Faith.

God wants you to pray expecting more than you can imagine. And to give alms trusting that God will multiply the blessings. Most of all God wants you to know, to trust, to believe that you are in the hands of God. Through Christ your past and your present and your future are all embraced by God in forgiveness and in care and in promise.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Do not be afraid, believe.

Do not be afraid to let go of possessions and securities and familiar things to follow where the Lord leads you. Do not be afraid as change unsettles your world. Do not be afraid when the barrenness of sickness, or poverty, or loneliness might cause you to doubt the promise. Look at the stars, remember Abraham. Most of all remember Jesus.

Remember that he faced every enemy for you, suffered the worst that they could give. And trusted his Father still.

Remember that when there was no more power in him, that the Father did not forget him but raised him up to life that is eternal.

Remember that eternal life with Jesus is the city toward which you journey.

Journey in faith.