

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Abram's Story

Lesson: Genesis 12:1-4

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

*2 "I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.*

*3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."*

4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

Genesis 12:1-4 we read are a story about God calling Abram, promising to him, and Abram obeying God's word. Abram later became Abraham and is known to us as the father of faith.

When I read and reflect on Abram's story of trusting in God and following God's word despite his fears and doubts, it often reminds me of when I was a child learning to ride a bike for the first time.

(Slide 1) When I was a kid, I enjoyed riding my bike. I started with a tricycle at age 3-4, and later moved on to a bike with training wheels. One day, my friends took off their training wheels and I thought it looked cool, so I decided to take mine off too.

However, the difference between riding with and without training wheels was greater than I had anticipated. First of all, riding a bike without training wheels required good balance, which was not easy for me. Additionally, I was afraid of falling, so I couldn't easily lift my feet off the pedals. After removing the training wheels, I was unable to enjoy riding my bike for a while due to my fear of falling, and my two feet had to replace the role of the pedals.

One day, my mother saw me pulling my bike with my feet while sitting on the seat. She offered to teach me how to ride a bike and took me to a school

playground where I could learn to ride safely without any obstacles. My mother held onto the back of my bike so that I wouldn't fall, and I put my feet on the pedals for the first time while looking straight ahead. My mother said to me, "I'll hold onto you from behind so that you won't fall, and you just need to look ahead and pedal."

I was afraid of falling, so I continued to look back to see if my mom was still holding me while pedaling. But as my mom held onto me, I gained courage and started pedaling while looking straight ahead. When I had ridden about 60 yards, I told my mom, "Mom, I can finally ride a bike!" Then I turned around and realized that my mom was waving at me from 60 yards away.

As I saw my mother smiling brightly and waving at me, I felt a slight sense of betrayal, but from that day on, I was able to ride a bike by myself. The trust that my mother was securely holding onto me from behind helped me overcome my fear, and the courage I gained from that trust propelled me forward.

There are many stories in the Bible, and among them, there is a recurring theme from the Old Testament to the New Testament. This is disobedience to God's word and repentance, and God's forgiveness, and again disobedience, repentance, and God's forgiveness.

God created the world and created humans. The first humans lived with God in the Garden of Eden. However, they disobeyed God's word, and as a result, they could no longer live in the Garden of Eden. But God did not give up on them and gave them garments of skin, and their descendants prospered. Humans continued to thrive, and their lives became stable.

(Slide 2) However, at the same time, they began to forget to God's grace and started to corrupt themselves. Eventually, God instructed Noah to prepare an ark and sent a great flood to cleanse the earth, sparing only Noah and his family and animals on the ark. After the flood, God made a rainbow covenant with humans to never again send such a disaster. Humans prospered and began to build a city and tower to make a name for themselves, but this was a disobedient act against God. As a result, they were unable to communicate with each other in a single language.

Through the stories of human disobedience, repentance, and God's forgiveness that are repeated in the Bible, we can learn that humans tend not to seek God when their lives are stable, and everything is going well according to their plans. When we think about it, this statement seems to be true. Let me ask you: when do you pray more fervently? Do you pray more when your heart is peaceful and everything is going as usual or even better than usual, or do you pray more when something doesn't go as planned, when you or your family or friends are sick, when you are facing financial difficulties, when someone experiences a disaster, or when something makes your heart heavy and difficult?

(Slide 3) Let's move on to the story of Abram. God, who created humans, knew that humans tend not to follow God when their lives are stable. God approached Abram, who was living a stable life, and said, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you." (12:1) Abram lived in a time when family and relatives were considered very important for survival in a tribal society. He and his family had already settled in a place called Harran, where they were farming, and his life seemed to be very stable. However, God told him to leave his homeland and go to the place that God would show him.

God promised to show Abram the land, but from Abram's perspective, the land was unknown. Moreover, when Abram suddenly heard God's call, he probably had no plans in his head. And perhaps he had many concerns about his family and survival, such as what to do if he encountered wild animals while going to the land that God had spoken about, because God had told him to go to a place he had never seen before.

God knew Abram's worries and fears, so promised him: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.....all people on earth will be blessed through you." (12:2-3)

After hearing God's promise, the more Abram thought about it, the more his fears turned into courage, his worries turned into faith, and his concerns turned into conviction. He left for the land that God had promised him. Although Abram could not have any plans for God's plan, God had already

prepared everything for him. When he left his homeland, his life became unstable and uncertain, but because of God's promise, his life was protected and became certain.

Friends, what is important in Abram's story is that when God told him to go to an unknown land, Abram, like us, felt fear and perhaps had some attachment to the property he had already build in Harran. However, Abram believed in God's promise and obeyed God's word.

The more I read Abram's story, the more I think that his journey to the promised land is similar to all journeys in our lives. Without realizing it, we tend to rely on things other than God. When we were children, we relied on parents, and as students we relied on knowledge. Sometimes, we rely on our experiences, and at other times we rely on family, friends, youth, and relationships.

As time goes by and we get older, we become independent from parents, and the knowledge we have learned becomes outdated as the world changes rapidly. We also come to realize that friendships and relationships, which once seemed eternal, are not forever, and money is very fluid, sometime there and sometimes not. We also realize that even youth, which once seemed eternal, is not forever as we see the wrinkles and white hairs increasing. We know a lot, but at the same time, I feel like we cannot see even a step ahead into the future.

Life is always changing and unpredictable, which can make us feel worried and stressed. However, the only eternal and true God is always with us in times of difficulty, encouraging us, restoring us, giving us courage and hope, and strength, and providing us with positive thoughts and constantly helping us to keep going.

In any situation, God never gives up on us. And just as God promised to Abram, He also promised us: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will your name great, and you will be a blessing." (12:2)

Even when we sometimes find it difficult to understand the situations that lie ahead of us, I pray that we can always rely on God's love for us and move forward bravely. Amen.