

Righteousness  
Genesis 15:1-6  
August 7, 2022

Here we are back with Abraham, or should I say Abram, before God renamed him and Sarai. Abram has just got back from chasing down those who kidnapped Lot and a bunch of others. On his way back he meets Melchizedek, king of Salem and pronounces a blessing from God. Abram then gives a 10th of the spoils to Melchizedek.

It is after this that the Lord came to Abram in a vision. It is a vision that tells of how Eliezer will not be the heir but Abram and Sarai will have a son. Yet what did you hear a couple weeks ago? We heard of three angels coming to Abraham, note the name change and tell him and Sarah that in a year they will have a son.

We are going backwards here, you might say. At the education conference a week ago, a pastor there said that to really learn what you have written you should read it backwards, maybe those who set up the lessons for the last few weeks were thinking along those lines.

Most of you know the sequence of the account of Abram and Abraham, so going backwards is kind of odd and yet as we look backwards, doesn't it guide you to think, think of what went on before? This will be the last lesson from this section of scripture. Later we will look at a couple more passages from Genesis, Genesis 4 where we will look at Cain and Abel and we will look at a latter chapter in Genesis where Jacob will be the focus of God's intervention.

Today we are led to this passage that speaks to us all. Abram looked to the Lord to provide an heir and yet it would be some time before He would come again as Abraham was resting under the tree.

We know Abraham was picked by God when he didn't know God and yet when God had him leave his home country and travel, Abram and Sarai did just that. They were led to where they now lived and Lot had separated from Abram because of their growing herds of animals. All this was before today.

Abram had trusted the Lord from his call in Haran. All those things that happened in his life up till today's lesson, he had gone through and now had in his mind and heart. Oh, he was promised in his call by God that included Abram becoming a great nation that his name would be great and a great blessing to others and those who would dishonor him, the Lord would take care of. Abram trusted God then and his faith was still in the Lord.

It wasn't until today's text though, that all the trust in the Lord by Abram is seen as something that we base our whole hope on in our relationship with God that gives us any hope of our blessing. It is in the text for today that we see the word, Righteousness.

Righteousness, right with God. Abram had taken on the kings to get Lot back, not for himself but for the king of Sodom. He looked to the Lord to take care of him. He believed the

Lord even if he still didn't have a son and as we know it wouldn't be until 25 years after his call and promise, that he would see the promised heir, his son, Isaac. In the lesson today we see Abram believing the Lord and the Lord counted that belief as righteousness.

Abram was an unbeliever until the Lord chose him. He had lived as an enemy of God until God stepped into his life. There was nothing in him that the Lord should have chosen him but he like us was loved, loved by the Lord when we were still sinners, enemies of God.

Abram believed not only that the Lord would provide a son but would also fulfill the rest of His promise to number his offspring as the stars of the sky. Improbable at the time but Abram must have thought that the Lord was the God of the improbable. That is the faith Abram had and we too look to as what it means to be people of faith.

You may look at yourself as an improbable person for the Lord to work with, with all that needs to be done to get the Word out about Him and yet He has you here today, to hear of a guy who believed God.

God chose you in your baptisms to be His own. Was there anything in you or Abram that the Lord should have chosen you? NO. There wasn't anything in any of us. He came to us while we were sinners to work with and through us to bring the Law and Gospel to a world He was laying out before us.

Did Abram know how this all was going to take place? As I said earlier, it would be 25 years before the promise in the beginning would come true.

What do you believe that seems to many improbable? How could a little water and a few words do anything for a baby who can't even talk or confess the faith? To many, improbable and yet it is the Holy Spirit, working through the water and the Word that creates faith in the child, even though she may not have the understanding she will have after she sits at the feet of her parents to hear the Word read to her and then picks it up for herself to read and learn, throughout her whole life, so that she grows in greater understanding with each passing day in the Word.

Yes, many would say, the Bible is an outdated book written by a bunch of men and yet you don't say that but say that is the Word of God, put down by various authors over many years, with the overarching emphasis on Jesus, the Messiah, promised way back to Adam and Eve, yes, we believe they were placed on this earth at the end of 6, 24 hour days where the Triune God created everything, visible and invisible.

There is another improbability. The righteousness we were given in our baptisms needs to be sustained. We can lose that relationship with God when our sinful nature, tempted by the devil and the world get to thinking we don't need the Lord and we have better plans for our lives. The Lord wants to keep the faith He has given us strong, looking to Him, even when the improbable raises its head in our lives.

Later we will be partaking of all things, the very body and blood of Jesus who died on a cross, rose from the grave, ascended bodily into heaven and now reigns. How could a little wafer, a sip of wine hold the body and blood of one who walked on this earth 2000 years ago. Another improbability and yet we know that as fact.

We finally believe that one day, even though these bodies will die, we will rise again, bodily to be with Jesus and live with Him in a new heaven and earth where sin will be no more. How can we believe that? Some would say dust you are and to dust you shall return, never to ever live again but only to be nutrients for some plant or animal. But because we are promised that we too will rise on the last day, we believe the dust will become, will be formed again into a glorified body that will live and breathe and go about life, eternally.

Improbable by worldly standards and yet you believe. Does God consider that belief as righteousness, yes. You have been made right with God by the faith you have been given. You didn't work for it. You didn't pay for it. You didn't even inherit it from a faithful grandmother. No, you were given it as a gift, a free gift from God Himself. He gave it to you and through the Word and sacrament continues to sustain that faith in you.

There are so many though who do not believe what you believe. There are those who think it is OK to take the life of the life in a womb. Some would even say it is OK to take that life even after it is born up until some subjective day in the future. Yet, you don't believe that to be true. You believe that every life is given by the Lord and from the time that the sperm penetrates that egg, a new life, genetically, a, totally different life is created by God.

Babies, wanted, unwanted, miracles and just would seem the everyday and yet the Lord wants each of them to know Him and be brought into His family through the water and the Word.

The Lord created those babies, male and female but there are some in this world who would say, maybe God made a mistake and seek to convince your boys and girls that they may not be the sex they should be and want them to mutilate their bodies or live lives contrary to who God made them to be. We don't believe that. We believe God doesn't make mistakes but will use those who are confused by this life to look to Him, bearing that cross as they look to Him to sustain them in this life as the deal with a broken world.

We even believe what the Lord had put in the Constitution of the United States. It says that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. We believe those rights are given by God and not by the government. There are those who think that because of the color of their skin, they are told that they must be oppressed and if they are oppressed then others must be the oppressors, even if they haven't personally done anything to them or others. We think this is of the devil. He wants people to be at each other's throats. We know that every person is just as valuable to God as the next. He went to that cross for all.

So many things we live with are not true according to God and His Word. We are to be like the Bereans who checked the Word of God to see if what they were being taught was in line with the Word of God. We too are to do the same.

Abram trusted the Lord. The Lord blessed him in time with a son and from that son many more, including you and me who are his offspring, not by blood but by faith. We as he, even though Jesus hadn't come yet, looked to Jesus the author and perfecter of faith who died looking to us as those who needed what He came to bring.

Jesus looked to Abram and Sarai to have a son who would have sons, who would have other sons and daughters to fill the earth and to look to Him for their righteousness. It can't be had by going along with the crowd. It can't be had by going against God and His Word but if a person doesn't know the Word, then how far can they be led astray by fancy talk or seemingly good actions?

God's Word says Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Abram had his share of wolves. He was wise to trust in the Lord and let the Lord lead him in his life as improbable as some of the circumstances were. He is the Lord of your life as you go about your days. He has made you righteous through the water and the Word and continues to sustain you in the faith you were given.

When you come in contact with what seems to go against the Word of God, check His Word and don't be led away from it by seemingly trustworthy speech. Check the Word. Look to others who are in the Word as well and shine forth the truth of the Word to a world which doesn't know the Word of God.

With the Word, you have in the Holy Spirit, one who can change hearts, convict hearts that maybe come off as not listening, not believing but He will do what He does to bring them around to the Truth of God's Word, Jesus.

May He continue to strengthen that faith as He considers that faith as righteousness in you. You have been made right with God. How does that righteousness live out in your lives as you deal with those the Lord places in your lives? Do they know why you are righteous? Do they know where you stand on the issues of the day and why? Do they know how much you care about them because of who you are in Christ?

Righteous before God, Abram and you and those He brings to faith through you.