

Union United Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **Homecoming - The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob... you, and me**

October 30th, 2022. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Genesis 17:1-10; Galatians 3:6-18**

1. Abraham to Us, Children of Covenant Promise

As children of God, born of God's Spirit, baptized believers in Christ, we are descendants of Abraham by faith, beneficiaries of the covenant promises to Abraham, and are in a new covenant with God through the blood of Christ.

- **Children of God**

All of us who have received Christ, believed in his name, are born again (born of God) and are children of God.

"To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12-13 NRSV

In our baptism by water, we have shared in the death and resurrection of Christ. In Christ, we are to walk in newness of life.

3Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4Therefore **we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.**" Romans 6:3-4 NRSV

- **Made Righteous by Faith**

Abraham became righteous in God's eyes, just because he believed what God promised him. In the same way, we have become not only children of God, but God has gifted us righteousness because of our faith in Christ.

"Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Gen 15:6
6Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," 7so, **you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham.**
Galatians 3:6-7 NRSV

- **Blessed with Abraham**

In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham:

"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." Genesis 12:2

Paul explains that this blessing applies to us. This was the gospel of Christ proclaimed to Abraham.

"The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you." 9For this reason, **those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.**" Galatians 3:8-9 NRSV

We are blessed with Abraham. This means that the blessing of God on Abraham is also our blessing.

- **Redeemed by Christ into Blessing**

Obedience to the laws of Moses in the Old Testament results in many promised blessings; but disobedience results in a penalty - a curse that showed up in many ways including sickness, poverty, etc (Deuteronomy 28 and 29).

Christ redeemed us from this curse by his death on a cross.

"13Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"— 14in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Galatians 3:13-14 NRSV

This is the essence of Grace: simply by receiving and believing in Christ, we are freed from the curse of the law, receive the blessing of Abraham though not his descendants by physical birth, and receive the promise and blessing of the Holy Spirit in our lives, the Spirit who empowers us to live victorious over all the challenges of life and to be witnesses for Christ.

2. Covenant Children, Called to Walk in God's Ways, for Generations

In Genesis 17, God reaffirms his covenant with Abraham and Sarah and gives them signs to constantly remind them of his covenant.

For a bit more clarity, here is a translation from the Contemporary Torah, JPS, 2006 (see Tanakh on sefaria.org):

Genesis 17:1-2,7

אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו **אֲנִי־אֵל שַׁדַּי** הַתְּהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי וְהָיָה תַמִּים:

1 "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, יהוה [Adonai - the Lord] appeared to Abram and said to him, "**I am El Shaddai.** [*El Shaddai Traditionally rendered "God Almighty."] **Walk in My ways and be blameless.**"

וְאֶתְנֶנָּה בְרִיתִי בֵינִי וּבֵינְךָ וְאַרְבֶּה אוֹתָךְ בְּמֵאֹד מְאֹד:

2I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will make you exceedingly numerous."

וְהִקְמַלְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי בֵינִי וּבֵינְךָ וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ אַחֲרַיךָ לְדֹרֹתָם לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לְהָיוֹת לְךָ לֵאלֹהִים וְלִזְרַעֲךָ אַחֲרַיךָ:

7 **I will maintain My covenant between Me and you, and your offspring to come,** as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages, **to be God to you and to your offspring to come.**

Paul again explains that "offspring" here refers to Christ, through whom we also become Abraham's descendants:

"Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring; it does not say, "And to offsprings," as of many; but it says, "And to your offspring," that is, to one person, who is Christ." Galatians 3:16 NRSV

Important to note:

- We are called to
 - Walk in God's ways
 - Be blameless in God's sight (live holy lives)
- God wants to be in covenant not only with us, but our offspring too.

What are God's ways? Love, righteous living, faithfulness, living by faith, practicing justice, etc.

3. Called to Teach God's Ways, From Generation To Generation

It is important to recall why God chose or called Abraham in the first place.

17The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18 seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?19No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; so that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." NRSV

- *Abraham was God's partner in blessing the world.*
- *God chose Abraham to pass on the ways the Lord to his descendants.*

As Christians, why have we been called to be the Christians?

Has God changed in this respect? Are we not called to a similar purpose, to be partners of the Lord to bless the world, and to pass on the Lord's ways to our families and descendants?

As we celebrate Homecoming today, let us examine ourselves. Have we been faithful in teaching God's ways to our descendants (our children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, ...)? Are we doing our best to pass on God's covenant in Christ to the next generation?