

**Sermon: February 25, 2018**

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**Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16**

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him,

"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

**Romans 4:13-25**

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. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, 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. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." 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), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

## **A Faith for the Generations.**

Last week we talked about the Rainbow Covenant. A promise that God made to humanity to always be in relationship. A promise to love us no matter what we may or may not do.

Today we read about another covenant. One that God makes to Abraham and all of the generations that were to follow him.

And Paul writes the to Romans to remind them that this covenant, this promise is not one that is based in following rules...but instead it is dependent on faith...the same faith that Abraham had when in his old age he had practically given up having any descendants and God came to him and promised him he would not just be a father...but a father to all nations with descendants so numerous it would be beyond imagination.

I think that the interesting thing about this passage in Romans is that Paul omits the entire story which would make the Romans and us believe that Abraham never wavered in his faith but if we look back we can see that although Abraham was faithful in the end...

Faith:

“Only God Can create faith, but the church can cultivate religious faith in hearts wher mistrust has predominated.”<sup>1</sup> Contemporary culture is marked by suspicion of churches...those who have defrauded the church and followers have made society wary of giving to the church. Awareness of sexual abuses and scandal in the church. The church who has failed society through good intentions: Good intentions of slavery...good intentions of Colonization, good intentions of Missionaries who have erased cultures for the sake of saving the souls of the heathens.

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<sup>1</sup> Feasting on the Word. Year B, Volume 2, 64

“To cultivate faith requires that the church make promises as clear as God does. The Lord promises to Abraham a legacy of descendants and rich land. Jesus Christ’s promises—forgiveness and eternal life—outline the church’s promises to its community. What can we add to these promises...

“Jesus said even a mustard seed” of faith is enough. We are to live by trust in God’s grace in Jesus Christ, not in our own sinlessness. God is calling forth a courageous church that takes risks and trusts, rather than living the spiritually immobile life of simply trying not to make any mistakes. This church relies on God to do greater things, even when proof is not available. This church is called to be as bold as father Abraham, willing to go out not exactly where it is going, but trusting the God who leads to a promised land.”