

“Father Abram?”—Genesis 15:4-6

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Father Abram?”, is Genesis 15:4-6 → *The word of the LORD came to Abram: “Eliezer of Damascus shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” And He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then He said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Adoption . . . surrogate pregnancies . . . artificial insemination . . . in vitro fertilization . . . genetic research and engineering. All of these areas of study and activity have emerged in current years out of the desire for couples facing infertility to provide options for having children. As a result it has complicated our understanding of procreation especially in light of **God’s desire** in the midst of the process.

Issues of both the beginning of human life and the sanctity of that life continue to be discussed in much detail. Legal issues involving the rights of biological parents have surfaced in many cases, even to the point of

redefining family relationships. Add these issues to the redefinition of marriage and family by divorce, remarriage, step relationships and gender identity in our culture and it boggles the mind. I can't imagine the challenges of organizing a genealogy in an effort to record family connections properly today!

No doubt filial relationships and connections have become very complicated in our time. However, if you think your family dynamics are complicated put yourself in Abram's sandals during the period of his life revealed in our text. Actually, those issues that complicate our lives are small in comparison to the challenges which Abram and Sarai faced as they waited for the LORD to fulfill His promise to them.

Throughout the history of God's people Abram was typically referred to as *father Abraham*. (cf. Genesis 32:9; Joshua 24:3; Luke 1:73; 16:24,30; John 8:53,56; Acts 7:2; Romans 4:12) While they may have felt a security in Abraham being their "father," Abraham himself certainly struggle with such security throughout his life. Our text reveals one of those moments during his interaction with Yahweh when fatherhood simply did not look too promising.

Yahweh initiated His interaction with Abram in His usual manner—*Fear not*—along with a reassurance of God's protection and guidance in the midst of his fears and doubts—*I am your shield*, said the LORD. (cf. Genesis 15:1) Maybe Abram's fears had something to do with his recent battle with some

kings in an effort to save his nephew, Lot (cf. Genesis 14), and the possible aftermath of retaliation in the midst of such a victory.

However, Abram's response to Yahweh in Genesis 15:2-3 reveals fears of a different sort. It appears he will die childless since God had given him *no offspring* so *Eliezer of Damascus* would be his *heir*. This struggle is based upon God's initial promise to make Abram into a *great nation* in whom *all the families on the earth shall be blessed*. (cf. Genesis 12:1-3) Being "**father Abraham**" did not look too promising for him at the moment. Doubts and fears can easily set in for all of us if we have to wait ten years for God to keep His promise.

Waiting faithfully for the LORD to fulfill His promises is where the real challenge of the Christian faith finds its expression. We find ourselves in Abram's sandals, where the most complicated part of life is not trying to figure how to control our circumstances **but simply trusting the LORD in the midst of those circumstances even when we don't understand how He's working!** This is why Proverbs 3:5-6 says: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.* Like Abram and Sarai, we are sinners who struggle with trusting the LORD to fulfill His promises in our own lives, fearing or doubting that He'll follow through on His promises.

The LORD reassured Abram in verse 4 of our text: Eliezer of Damascus *shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir*. Even though verse 6 of our text says that Abram *believed the LORD*, we know this promise did not curtail the temptations and spiritual struggles which accompanied Abram and Sarai's faith in years to come. Later, under the temptation to doubt again, they tried to make God's promise come true through surrogate motherhood. Sarai offered her servant girl Hagar to Abram to produce an heir for them. Maybe this was her understanding of and answer to the LORD's promise that Abram would have an heir from his own body.

However, after the birth of Ishmael, they discovered once again that Yahweh was in control! Fourteen years later the LORD appeared to him again to inform them that Sarah would get pregnant and bear a son. (cf. Genesis 17:15-18:15) When things happen in God's way in His time they happen as His miracle for His purposes!

The LORD wanted to make Abram into a father for a much greater purpose. The *great nation* which God made from Abram was intended to be a people with a relationship with the LORD **based on faith in the promised Savior in his lineage**. By use of an "object lesson" in verse 5 of our text, God reaffirmed the greatness of this nation, all based on Abraham's *offspring of faith*! Yahweh *brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and*

number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then He said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

The promise was not so much about the physical people which would be born in Abram’s line. Rather, it was the One Who would come from Abram’s line and provide the way for people to be “born again” and go to heaven. Galatians 3:16 says *the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” Who is Christ.*

God’s promises in Scripture are given not just to fulfill physical promises in our lives but more importantly to fulfill His spiritual purposes in our lives! When we talk about, read about or reflect on God’s dealings with Abram in the Old Testament it should lead us to think about being God’s **people of faith**, not “belonging” because of some kind of nationalistic attachment. This faith is the focus of Abram’s *righteousness* according to verse 6 of our text: *He believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness.* Living in a right relationship with the LORD is based upon faith and trust in His promises and not upon the outcome of our circumstances in life.

We can recognize that Abram is our father as we daily live by faith in Jesus Christ, his *Offspring*, Who has brought about the LORD’s promised deliverance from sin in our lives through His life, death and resurrection!

Galatians 3:6-9 says: Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

You can live in a right relationship with the LORD simply by trusting and depending completely upon God’s work in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins! Because God fulfilled His promise to Abram in His time and in His way through the Person & Work of Jesus you have the benefit of being declared righteous in God’s sight, standing in a right relationship with Him! When you give in to the devil’s temptations of doubting God’s promises to you in Christ, falling into idolatrous worry and fears, you can confess those sins to God knowing that you are forgiven anew because of His steadfast love and faithfulness to you in Jesus! Through faith in Jesus you have the guidance and protection and the Holy Spirit Who empowers you for right living each day! You can rejoice in your faith heritage for this is **your** faith history sealed with God’s promises and faithfulness to father Abram and you! Amen.

Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage;

wait for the LORD! (Psalm 27:14)

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