

Genesis 12:1-9

Have you ever felt sometimes you don't quite measure up to other people? You might turn up to bible study and you find out Peter Jensen, the previous archbishop has come to visit. Maybe he came to check on Marty by popping in to the bible study. It's kinda intimidating. You might feel you don't measure up to his tower of knowledge. It's like reading Hebrews chapter 11 about the faith hall of fame of these great heroes of the faith and wondering... umm how do I measure up? Noah has 1 verse dedicated to him. Abraham has 7 verses. Well last time I checked I got none!

Well, man of faith Abraham was but he didn't start like that. Abraham was born into a sophisticated city called UR in Mesopotamia. He was born almost 4000 years ago but it was quite modern there. They even had tablets... clay tablets. Students could read, write and do maths. But they weren't worshippers of God. They had these ziggurat temples where they worshipped the moon god. Abraham's dad, Terah was an idolater. Joshua 24:2 NIV tell us that "Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods." Terah and in all probability Abraham were worshippers of the moon god when God called him. The names Sarai, Terah and Laban have something in the names that show an allegiance to the idol moon god.

But God called Abraham. Back when he was just plain Abram, when he was probably a worshipper of other god. There was nothing special about him. In fact Abraham and his wife were not doing so well in that his wife was barren and couldn't conceive. So when God called Abraham out of this place UR, there was not one thing special that would make God choose him. What made Abraham special was that God called him. Isaiah 51:2b NKJV "For I called him alone, And blessed him and increased him."

God called Abraham. But God called you and me as well. What makes Abraham and us special is that God called us by his grace. We like Abraham cannot never do enough to earn our call.

Sometimes as Christians, we think this call from God is like a roll call in class. Who's in class today? I am. Who is Christian here? Roll call. I am. Who wants to go to heaven and not go to hell? Roll call. I do. We think being a Christian is about putting up your hand, then come to church once a week and then glide into heaven when time is right. But friends, answering the call of God is so much more than saying I'm in. Like Abraham, we are called to go on a journey of faith. We are called to step out in faith to do the work that God has called each and everyone of us to do just like Abraham. He has a purpose for us.

So what did God call Abraham to do? Read Acts 7:2 and Genesis 12:1. Look at the tense of the verse. It says had. HAD. HAD. God had already called him when he was in Ur.

God had told him to leave 1. Leave your country – that's Mesopotamian Ur. 2. Leave your people. That's friends in Ur. And 3. Leave your father's household.

But what does Abraham do? You could imagine Abraham being all excited. God just appeared to him in UR. Could be a vision, a dream. It was something very vivid and special. Imagine him having a chat with his father. "Dad, I got to leave this place. Got to leave this place. Got to leave your household and goto a land he will show me."

However, instead of Abraham taking the lead, leaving his father's household and going to the land God will show him. What happens instead? It's his father who is an idolator, worshipper of foreign god or gods probably the moon god, but it is Terah who takes the lead. Genesis 11:31. NIV Terah took Abraham, his grandson Lot, Abraham's wife Sarah and set out moving from Ur to goto Canaan. The text doesn't tell us why Terah wanted to goto Canaan. Maybe it has something to do with Abraham's call from God.

But immediately in the next sentence, it says, "BUT when they came to Haran, they settled there." They intended to goto Canaan. They set out for Canaan but stopped in Haran. They could have checked the Mesopotamian Daily Planet... consulted Trip Advisor for hotels in Canaan.... Checked out Canaanrealestate.com.au ...They wanted to goto Cannan but no... after 600 miles of travelling they stopped in Haran and settled there. Just so you know ur is about 233km southeast of old babylon, haran 600 miles north west and canaan is another 400 miles to the west.

Now Haran seems to be a pretty good place. Haran had pastureland. Haran was fed by river that came off the great Euphrates River. Haran was a trade route and so had a good economy. Haran was a place where you could settle down. Haran was a place you could get rich. Haran was place you could put down roots. Haran also had moon god worship there which was probably Terah's god. Perhaps Terah (that is Abraham's dad) chose Haran because the moon god was there. It's familiar to him.

Terah settled in Haran and so did Abraham. It was the good son following his father's footsteps kinda thing. So, we still have the same kind of situation in Ur. Abraham was still living in his father's household, with that household still worshipping idols. Abraham is a follower of God now for sure, but Abraham still hasn't extricated himself from his father's idolatrous household.

I think this verse shows us the reality of life. We might have got call from God to become a Christian. We put up our hand. Yeah I'm in. Perhaps we remember how wonderful and how we were on fire for God in high school or university. We learned that we need to put God first over family and career. But then we got married or got a job. Or divorced or got made

redundant. Worse still, we got a mortgage. Perhaps, we got a call from God to go somewhere and do something for him. But that call had dimmed over the years, shouted down by other competing noises. What about the kids, the mortgage, the money –where's my security? Perhaps your parents have clear plans or ideas how you need to live out your life. Sometimes, it's just too hard when God calls us to be separate from this world.

We have to be careful we don't get stuck and settle for our own spiritual Haran. Abraham had to wait till his father died before he continued his journey. He was 75 years old when he continued his journey of faith. Could Abraham have continued his journey earlier? I think so. If he took charge in Ur and if he left his father's household behind. If he left his niece Lot behind, his journey could have been different.

Instead Abraham followed his father and settled in Haran. He put down roots there. He stayed long enough to get lots of worldly things from Haran. It says in 12:4. He took all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran. ABRAHAM got rich staying in Haran. God talks about all the blessing he is going to give Abraham in v2-3. But Abraham doesn't really need God's blessing, does he? He seems to have got it made.

But yet, Abraham obeyed. No more excuses. His father is dead. Surely, he can go now. There is nothing holding him back. He has lots of possessions. He's got people, servants, and maybe slaves. He has the security. So now he can obey God to the full. Right? Aren't we also like that? We like do everything our own way first. But God is really patient with us. He wants us to obey him, to do something for him. But we are full of excuses. Yet he is so patient with us. He lets us do our own thing, go our own way but in the end he still pushes us and prods us in the right direction.

God wanted to bless Abraham but it was conditional on his obedience. Abraham already got all he wanted from Haran. Money, people, possessions. But what God wanted from Abraham was obedience. He also wanted to bless Abraham.

God has got something better than what Haran can ever offer.

God will make Abraham into a great nation.

God will bless Abraham.

God will make his name great

All people on earth will be blessed through him.

When we think about blessing from God, we think well, material blessing. A healthy body. Right. Healthy, wealthy and wise. 5 bedroom house in suburbs. Kids going to private school. Bank full of money. 2 Mercedes Benz. Surely, that what God's blessing is right? Actually, no!

Let's look closely at the purpose of making Abraham a great nation. The purpose for blessing him. It is so that all peoples on earth will be blessed through him.

It is so that Abraham can found a nation that follows God so that all the peoples on earth can come to know him. God blesses Abraham so that he can be a blessing to others. God doesn't bless us so we can enjoy the good life. God blesses us so we can be blessing to others. When God called Abraham, he didn't call him just so Abraham can have a nice life. He called him for a purpose. So that he can be the channel, the conduit for the word of God, the gospel, the message of reconciliation to go out into all the world to bless all the peoples of the earth.

When we are called by God, it is not just so we can go to heaven. That's always nice to be heaven, don't get me wrong. But we are called, also because he wants to bless us too so we can bless others.

Listen to 2nd Cor 1:3-5 NIV

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

The blessing we receive from God can be material, can be comfort for our troubles, can be freedom from guilt and sinful bondage. But this blessing we receive, we are to share with others. You might have heard last week about the need for paid youth minister. That's Matt Morrison if you didn't know. The blessing you receive. The material blessing you receive can be used for example to support Matt for his work with the youth so that he can continue in Abraham's purpose of blessing all people on earth. Alternatively, it can be used to support Penny and Ben as they go off to be missionaries to Namibia. When Ben visits the broken prisoner in Namibia, bringing the gospel to him, he is also "blessing all peoples on earth."

When Abraham finally gets to Canaan, things don't fall neatly into place. There is no welcoming Canaanite welcoming committee welcoming him with a cocktail and a Hawaiian flower necklace. Instead he comes to a place called "the great tree of Moreh at Shechem." Moreh in Hebrew means teacher or instructor. It could well be that he comes to some sort of religious instruction place in Canaan. Right smack bang into land of idolatry. Abraham is not going to get an easy ride. There will be great and fierce opposition to him becoming a nation.

When we go about obeying God, we will receive opposition. When we go out to do his will especially when it comes to making disciples of all nations, we will have spiritual resistance. Things don't go right or problems get in the way. However, when we face opposition, we should not give up but dig deeper and rely on our God. by prayer and reliance on his word, we persist.

When Abraham obeyed God, God reappeared to him to reaffirm the covenant. When we walk in obedience with God, his presence will be with us. Read Matthew 28:19-20. The great Commission. His presence will surely be with us when we make disciples of all nations and teach people to obey him.

As I draw to a close for this sermon, I want to share with you a little of what I experienced in learning about receiving God's blessing. A couple of us from the church teach ESL, English as second language on Wednesdays. I was telling Lynn another ESL teacher a week and a half ago that my class numbers were down and if she could pray for us. It's kinda discouraging when you see a few people turn up to class. Anyway since about May last year, I have been teaching an easy bible class after English lessons. But something odd happened last Wednesday, we had only 2 students stay for the bible lesson but at the end of the lesson, one of the students who comes from a non Christian country, shared how in last year how Jesus had been helping her. She seemed quite touched by God. Tony Lamachia, another teacher and I were blessed to witness how God is blessing all peoples on earth. Perhaps God did answer Lynn's prayer but in a better way. When you take seriously God's call and be obedient to his call on your life, you will be blessed just like Abraham but not for yourself but so that you too can be a blessing to bring the joy of the Lord to all peoples on earth.