

## Sermon: Genesis 12:1-9. “Taking God at his Word”

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Sermon text and audio available for download at [www.waitara.anglican.asn.au](http://www.waitara.anglican.asn.au)

### Promises, promises!

- Broken and empty promises

Think for a moment about who you trust... and who you don't trust... is it because you can believe their words?...

Have you ever broken a promise? Have you ever said you would do something and then not done it? Or have you ever made an empty promise? An empty promise is a promise that's meaningless because you can't actually do it. For example, you might say to someone: I promise your car will never break down. I promise you will never get hurt. I promise you will get better. I promise I'll save you a piece of cake... But can you guarantee those things? Or are they empty promises?

People often break promises or make empty promises. And what that means is that we can't always trust what people promise. And maybe you can think of a particular person who you can't trust. Someone who has let you down or broken their promise to you. If you can think of that, then you probably know that broken promises leave us with broken or damaged relationships.

But God is different. God actually makes promises and keeps them. God's words are absolutely trustworthy. We can take God at his word. And in Genesis 12 God makes some important promises to a man called Abram.

Abram is a descendant of Noah. In fact, Abram is born when Noah is the ripe old age of 892. And Abram is a faithful man. Later his name is changed to Abraham. And God chooses Abram and says to him, Genesis 12:1, *“Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.”*

Genesis 12 is an incredibly important passage because this is where God chooses Abram and tells us his plan to save people from sin and death, beginning with Abram. And God starts by making three amazing promises. So let's look at these promises he makes to Abram – 3 amazing, and nearly impossible, promises:

### The (impossible) Promises of God

- First of all, God says to Abram, “Go to the land I will show you.”

God promises that he will give Abram land. And when Abram is 75 years old, 17 years after Noah died, He goes to enter the land of Canaan. And this is the first time we start to realise that God's promises seem impossible! He leads Abram to the land of Canaan, which is where... the Canaanites live! There are people living there. Lots of them! And God says – “I'm going to give you this land.” Now imagine walking into a country in the Middle East, and being told: I'm going to give you this whole land!” So that's the first “impossible promise” – God is going to give Abram the land of Canaan.

- Impossible promise number 2 – God says to Abram, “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you”

Why does this seem impossible? Because Abram is already 75 years old, and his wife Sarai, we read in Genesis 11:30, is barren – she cannot have children. She's about 65 years old. But God says He's going to make this old man and barren woman into a great nation. And later on God changes Abram's name to Abraham, which means “father of many”. Impossible promise number 2.

- Impossible promise number 3: I will make your name great and you will be a blessing.

Maybe this one doesn't seem impossible – but it is a bit strange! God says he will make Abram's name great and he will make his nation a blessing to other people.

Now I imagine Abram and Sarai might be thinking at this point – Why? Why is God going to do things this way? Why take an old man and his barren wife, give them a land occupied by someone else and make them into a great nation? And that's the question I would want to ask God at this point:

- Why does God do it this way?

Why choose an old man and his barren wife to do this? Why choose a land inhabited by Canaanites? Why choose to bless the world through **this** family?

Our answer is in verse 1. God says to Abram:

- “Leave **your** country, **your** people and **your** father's household and go to the land **I** will show you.”

This is all about what **God** will do. God wants to make sure it's absolutely clear to us that **HE** is the one making this happen. It's like God is saying – I'm going to choose the most impossible way to do this so you will never doubt that it's ME doing it. So you will know that it's me, and not you, that is making this happen! Right from the start, God wants us to know that it's not about what **WE** do, it's about trusting **HIM** and depending on what **HE** does.

So what does Abram do? How does he respond? With obedience:

## The Obedience of Abram (Abraham)

- Verse 4 – “So Abram left, as the Lord told him.”

What a great verse! What an amazing act of faith! He hears .. and he goes! He hears God's promises and he does what he says! Abram trusts God's words, he trusts God's plans, he trusts God's promises. Even when they seem impossible. And that's why Abraham is held up throughout the Bible as a model of faithfulness. For example, Romans 4:18-21

- <sup>18</sup> *Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”* <sup>19</sup> *Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead.* <sup>20</sup> *Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,* <sup>21</sup> *being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

Abraham was as good as dead. His wife was unable to have children. YET, he believed. Why? Because he was **fully persuaded** that God had the power to do what he promised! **That** is faith – believing, no matter what **YOU** think the possibilities are – that God is faithful, and will always keep his promises.

And did God fulfil his promises to Abram? Yes he did! He gave Abraham, at the age of 99, and Sarah, at the age of 90, a child. And through that child, Isaac, they became a great nation of hundreds and thousands of people, who eventually lived in the land of... Canaan.

God delivered every promise, even though it seemed impossible.

BUT... even though God was faithful to his promises, Israel was not faithful to him. They disobeyed him again and again and again and again. Why? The same reason as in the Garden of Eden. They didn't take God at his Word. They didn't trust completely in what God said.

## Taking God at his Word...

Do you take God at his Word? Do you trust God's promises? Do you trust what he says? Today I want us to think about the way we trust just ONE of God's promises: The promise of...

- Blessing.

God promises to bless the world through Abram. But what is blessing? I often hear people say "I'm so blessed", because they have a good job or a nice family or good health or a comfortable home or lifestyle. And that's true, but it's not the blessing God is talking about. Notice that God promises Abram land, and promises to make him into a great nation, and **then** he says "AND I will bless you." The land – the family – the nation – that's not the blessing. The heart of God's blessing to Abram was this – his relationship. What better way can God bless us than by saying: I will make you mine forever! You will be part of my family forever!

You see, that is real blessing. You can be rich and healthy, have a great family, a great job, and a great life, but still not be blessed because you don't have a relationship with God.

**But** you can be poor, sick, have no family, no friends, and have a terrible life, and be **blessed** because you're in a relationship with God.

Blessing is, simply, God favouring us. God being good to us. And how does he do that? By bringing us into a relationship with Him. And that's what God offers us today through Jesus. And that's why Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:20 –

- *"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ."*

Every one of God's promises come together in Jesus Christ, because through Jesus, everyone is able to come into a relationship with God. That's blessing! **We are blessed by being in relationship with God.** Rich or poor. Healthy or sick. Family or no family. Blessing **is** relationship with God through Jesus.

But there's another side to blessing. God also says to Abram – all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. God makes his people a blessing to others. WE are made to be a blessing to others.

Have you ever thought of yourself like that? Have you ever thought of being a blessing to the people around you? How do we show God's favour to the people around us? By showing His love. By being a servant. By acting with mercy and forgiveness. By being gracious and caring. How can you, this week, as a person blessed by God, in a relationship with Jesus, share God's blessing with the people around you?

So two challenges this week:

1. Put your trust in God and his promises, whatever direction he leads you in your life.
2. Find ways to be a blessing to the people around you.

And an extra one if you're up for it: tell someone – tell someone at the end of this week, how you trusted, and how you brought blessing to others.

Let's pray.