

SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER
The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

The Rev'd Warren E. Shaw, Rector

Lessons:¹

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the twelfth Chapter of the First Book of Moses, called Genesis.²

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram [**ĀY-brumm**], Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew [**SHOW**] thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram [**ĀY-brumm**] departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram [**ĀY-brumm**] was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran [**HAYA-ran**]. And Abram [**ĀY-brumm**] took Sarai [**SARE-eye**] his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran [**HAYA-ran**]; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan [**KAY-nunn**]; and into the land of Canaan [**KAY-nunn**] they came.

“And Abram [**ĀY-brumm**] passed through the land unto the place of Sichem [**SYE-kemm**], unto the plain of Moreh [**MOE-reh**]. And the Canaanite [**KAY-nunn-ight**] was then in the land. And the LORD appeared unto Abram [**ĀY-brumm**], and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel [**BETH-ull**], and pitched his tent, having Bethel [**BETH-ull**] on the west, and Hai [**HAY-eye**] on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD. And Abram [**ĀY-brumm**] journeyed, going on still toward the south.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the third Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Galatians.³

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham [**ĀY-bruh-hamm**] believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham [**ĀY-bruh-hamm**]. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham [**ĀY-bruh-hamm**], saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham [**ĀY-bruh-hamm**].”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the First Lesson: “*Now the LORD had said unto Abram [**ĀY-brumm**], ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And 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.’*”⁴ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Homily:

The God that we meet in the Bible is a God Who challenges people and makes demands upon them. He calls people

out of their comfort zones into new and unfamiliar pursuits. Those who respond to God's call to adventure are not only rewarded with personal blessings but become blessings to other people as well. So it was a man named Abram, later known as Abraham. God called him to leave his home and his extended family to go on a journey to an unspecified destination. And God made this promise: *"I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing."*

Abram was already seventy-five years old. He was living in one of the great centers of ancient civilization with his father, who was a wealthy man, and his extended family. One would think that he would find it very hard to leave all of that to go on a very uncertain adventure. *"To a land that I will show thee,"* was all that God told him about his destination.

But Abram was a man of faith. He believed that God would guide him and provide for him. He believed that something beyond his personal comfort was worth making a sacrifice for and taking a risk for. So Abram stepped out of his comfort zone, not really knowing where he was going until he got there, and even then God did not allow him to stay there.

We would never have heard of Abraham if he had simply remained in Haran as Abram. His life would have come to an end with no real significance and no lasting impact on the world. But Abraham, even after all these years, is revered by three great religions that look to him as an example of what faith means.

In the New Testament lesson for today, Jesus says, *"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it."*

That does not necessarily mean that you have to die, although it can mean that. Many a Christian martyr has found eternal life when he lost his life in this world for his testimony to Christ. But Abraham was not called to martyrdom. He was

called to give up the comfort and security of his life as Abram for an uncertain future. He found his real life when he gave up his old one, and he found his true identity. Abraham is the prototype of everyone who has the courage and the faith to respond to God's call to adventure. Many have followed in his steps.

All of the Apostles left relatively comfortable lives to follow Jesus wherever he led them. Albert Schweitzer gave up a tenured professorship in theology and philosophy as well as a profitable career as a concert organist to study medicine and go to Africa as a missionary. Others have retired early from various careers to pursue holy orders or take monastic vows or work in depressed areas of our own country. They left their comfort zones to find ways of serving others, and have been greatly rewarded with a sense of fulfillment and of having made a difference in the world.

You can find a blessing too if you are willing to answer God's call to adventure. Albert Schweitzer received a Nobel Prize, and Abraham himself accumulated many possessions. But the reward is not always a material one, and it is never only that. The greatest blessing is knowing that you have found your true self and been a blessing to others, and left the world a better place than when you entered. A reward like that is always more than worth the risk.

Your call to adventure doesn't have to be as dramatic as the examples I have given. It can be something as simple as going back to school, or tithing your income, or taking on a responsibility that you're not sure you can handle. Just remember that a call from God involves reward as well as risk, and that God will guide you as you go.

Don't try to tell me you are too old. Abram was seventy-five when he left Haran for parts unknown. And besides, the older you get the more you should be thinking about your legacy and the way you will be remembered in the world.

Somewhere out there you have a destiny waiting. Are you willing to leave your comfort zone to find it?

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St. David's Anglican Catholic Church
Charlottesville, Virginia

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¹ *Psalms and Lessons for the Church Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxviii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

² Genesis 12:1-9 (KJV).

³ Galatians 3:1-9 (KJV).

⁴ Genesis 12:1-2 (RSV).