

July 2, 2021

Genesis 23:1-4, 19, 24:1-8, 62-67

Psalms 106

Mt. 9:9-13

Two of the boldest words in all literature comes from the Book of Genesis: "Abram went." Bolder still is the call itself (from God): "Go forth to the land that I will show you."

These weeks we have been delving into the ancestral stories of our faith and we find that these people are often on the move-- following a call that is coming from seemingly outside of themselves and feeling compelled to follow it.

Abram went- and then this family- and then all the descendants thereafter. They traveled with no known compass yet put their faith in a promise that seemed impossible, a dream of something new yet beyond them, and a future not yet known. Today, we hear another chapter in this family, that of Isaac and Rebekah.

The Old Testament notion of Covenant is strikingly revealed in these early stories. We can think a minute about what this Covenant meant: not just a contract, not just an agreement but more like a marriage relationship with all the nuances of love, fidelity, loyalty, trust, permanence and always, clear-sighted mercy that goes to the heart beyond timidity and failings and sin.

In this case when one of the parties is God, it seems like it is a 90% to 10% kind of thing. With the 90% on God's part who initiates it all. And then promises to never abandon the covenant.

Yet, here is the part that is mystery and Gift:

God put the desire in them to respond, to follow to trust.

A grace, really, that is stronger than whatever might have held them back.

When we move through the centuries in our lectionary and then the no longer ancient (but not yet recent) history of the New Testament, the Covenant

continues with Jesus inviting Matthew "to a land that I will show you". Here it is a path to holiness, called discipleship.

Bold again since Jesus clearly knew who he was calling as he looked at him in his despised tax booth—a not so sterling reputation. This was a direct and a very personal invitation. Jesus investigated the heart of Matthew, knew who he was and knew too, who he would become.

Matthew went.

When we think about these stories and then think of ourselves, we may wonder about how it is that we responded to a call that was in a sense (or it seemed) outside of ourselves and then it was fine-tuned inside of ourselves, that is in our desire to follow.

How is it that things are a certain “fit”? Especially when it comes to something so important as to how we live our lives?

Why do we follow a certain path? A specific work? A particular course, readings, studies? Why do we navigate to certain people, befriending some and aligning ourselves with others, choosing a mission to spend ourselves?

Following even a bold passion that we give our lives to without knowing always where it will lead? How is this so deep in us?

Well, who really knows all of this? I don't.

But I do accept mystery. I do accept gift. I recognize that it is a call from beyond even as it is a call within me. And I know, without a doubt, clear-sighted mercy.

I need and want to live my life like scripture, that is, God's invitation to me to do even my 10%.

Because even with all that I muddle through in life and in all that my personal history with its many twists and turns, I have experienced the 90% (more like 100% or even 110%) of the Covenant with all the qualities of love, fidelity loyalty, trust, permanence, and mercy that goes beyond my timidity, failings and sin.

The wonder of it all is that through us the Covenant moves forward into new lands. God finds us where we are, invites us to go forth and with this invitation gives us the desire to follow the path in whatever unique situation we are in.

The Covenant continues.