

March 13, 2022
Second Lent

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

“Remember the Promise”

What do we do when things just aren't going well? We hope and pray for a little relief. Sometimes that takes the form of “wait and see” and sometimes we reach our limits of waiting and act on the feeling, “Something has to give.”

Sometimes, even after waiting, nothing gives at all. Sometimes patience wears thin, and our long suffering begins to feel like just suffering. We aren't very good at waiting till the cows come home. *Anybody here ever wait for cows to come home?* I once tried to encourage cows to go home and had a very large cow rear up on its hind legs right in front of me to turn and go the other way. That was one unhappy cow. 2,000 pounds of “don't mess with my tranquility” took all that effort to turn around and plod back home.

I am confident I have felt like that cow: *Minding my own business believing that will keep me safe from what can hurt in life and, bam!* Something presses in and makes me pay attention whether I want to or not.

This was Abraham's experience in our reading today. He had obeyed God and left everything he knew and journeyed *to a land which God would show him*. That's a promise short on specifics if you ask me. But he went. He did what God asked always...but then one day he began to feel like that cow whose inner tranquility would not be still. “So, Abraham – you have done really well for God – **what's God done for you lately?**” It wasn't too long before the crux of his disappointment became crystal clear, and he had to tell God about it.

“Hey Lord! I think you're great, but *I am worried.*” God responded and told Abraham not to be afraid because, you know Abraham...**I am** your shield. And Abe said, “Well that's all well and good but what I really need you haven't provided.” How can you truly bless me if I don't have a son?

Sound familiar? We all have days when we also have *serious and apparently unsolvable* challenges rise up before us. Like that cow.

Do you remember when Job did this? Complaining it was unfair that life had been so harsh when he was such a good guy? It is almost encouraging when we realize that two righteous people who loved God **have told God the truth about being disappointed** in life. Almost encouraging. Ever so briefly.

What does God tell Job? – God points out that Job doesn't really know all that much and shouldn't get in over his head. And it was enough for Job. What does God tell Abraham? **God reiterates the promise.** Look at the Stars, Abraham, so shall your descendants be. Not to be picky – but that really isn't much of an answer, is it? God doesn't argue and say, "Oh, Abram, *relax, things aren't really as bad you think they are.* No, God simply **accepts the reality of the concerns** – and *they are often very real in times of waiting* - **and reaffirms the promise.** Here is the promise Abram – take it from me – you want to have a better life? Remember the promise.

This is hard. We are so much better at looking at challenges than we are remembering the promise. But remember the promise we must. Because like Abraham, **it provides us with a way home when we have lost our way.**

A few years ago, there was a commercial which, in its own way, acknowledged that *sometimes we are just off track and need to find our way back.* It went like this. (Show Betty White playing football ad)

I could watch this ad every day for a month. Who doesn't like Betty White and Abe Vigoda? (God rest their souls) I believe that at the beginning of our passage today we can reasonably imagine Abraham and Sarah have become Betty White and Abe Vigoda. *They just don't feel up to the call anymore.* And God came to them and restarted the clock – giving them the ability to wait longer – by the power of the promise.

"You're not you when you're hungry." Well, **you are not you when you focus on circumstances and forget the promise,** either. Friends, life is hard. But that doesn't mean it can't be good. Some days we aren't ourselves. But that doesn't mean we can't *find what we need for living* when we **remember and rely upon the promises of God.**