

2023 Call of Abram

What are you doing God!?

Ever thought that? Said that? Prayed that?

It crossed my mind as I read our Old Testament lesson earlier this week.

God calls Abram and tells him to move. “Ok. I guess.” God promises protection to this particular family. “That’s good for them, I suppose.” And he promises to give them some land for his offspring to live in. “Neat!”

But, God. There are other families in the world, who are, you know, dying. They need some help too, don’t they?

Well, I should have read a little better, then shouldn’t I? Verse 3: “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” All the families. So many of them.

Good, I’m glad God cares about them too. And boy how exciting it will be as God works to save them by… Abram packing his bags. While a woman somewhere

dies giving birth. Then traveling up the Euphrates for a few months. While a famine hits another land and people go hungry. Then he packs his tent up again

and goes south to canaan, who knows how long that takes. And someone

somewhere is murdered. And then, if we recall, he goes to egypt during a famine,

then comes back – all while Sodom and Gomorrah are jostling with adulterousness.

And then after all of that, it's still not until Abram is 100 years old – 25 years after the Call he receives in our text today, that his son, Isaac, is even born!

God what are you doing!? People are dying! Why the fixation with this one family? And if you are going to use them, can you hurry it up a little bit!?

And maybe we think similar thoughts about our lives. God what are you doing? That death, that horrible thing on the news that depresses you. That sin you struggle with that you've prayed so much for God to take away. That sickness, that pain, that fear, that doubt. God what are you doing!?

Well, I think there are a couple comforts. First, I think we will find comforts that point to the fact that while we may be unable to see how God is at work, that certainly does not mean he isn't. Second, I think we will find that the plans he has told us about, well, perhaps they are more effective than we might expect.

I think we see evidence of this even in Abram's story. If we go a few chapters past our text today Abram runs into a man named Melchizedek. He is a priest of the Most High and Only God, Yahweh. He is also a King. And we see Abram give HIM tribute. Who is this guy, and where did he come from? Good question.

Answer: No idea. But isn't that the point. We might think God is not at work in the world, while it suffers and dies, but that is simply not the case. Here is a priest of

God whose people must clearly know of the true God. And who knows what other influence he or others like him had around the world.

And I'm not even suggesting anything "mystical" is going on here (though I will always admit that the Holy Spirit can do whatever he wants – and he certainly just decided to Call Abram out of seemingly nowhere), I think perhaps an explanation of the faith of Melchizedek and others like him is simply the fact that after the flood, literally everyone in the whole world knew about God. And perhaps that word, while lost by many yes, tragically, maybe was clung to by some.

But here and any further beyond is speculation because, back to our text today, this is the account we have in God's word. God's Word is concerned now with telling the story of this bloodline. Abraham's. And it will show how he will keep his promise to bless the whole world through it. It takes time, yes, but it works, just as he promised, and usually in a greater way than anyone expected.

I mean, think of your favorite mystery story or show, your favorite epic novel. We watch and read marvelous stories and narratives that come together in beautiful and poetic ways. And we think the One who made the brains who came up with those stories is unable to craft a story, a narrative, a history of salvation that surpasses anything we might expect?

And so we hear in Gal 5: But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And who is that Son of God? Matt 1: The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of *Abraham*.

How does God bless all families of the world through this family of Abraham?

Well, through that bloodline - through the sinners in it, the Kings in it, the evil ones in it, the faithful ones in it -God brings forth a Savior. The Chosen One, long prophesied who, as we heard promised today, came because of his love for the whole world.

And what an amazing thing his ministry was! You could see and tell God was at work! Miracles, astounding teaching, compassion. Yes! Finally! God is doing something.

And then that Son of Abraham was nailed to a cross. His followers were scattered, distraught, confused. And do you know what they were thinking? “What are you doing God!?” They could not see how God could be at work to save a dying world, as the Son of Abraham was dying.

I bet it was hard to see how God was at work right then. With gruesome death in front of them, and threatening them, as they hid behind locked doors, I don’t think

the suffering servant songs came to mind, I don't think the threads with the sacrificial system were connecting at all, I don't think Jesus' promise to rise again meant anything – maybe it meant he was crazy. Maybe he was a fraud the whole time. That almost seemed easier to see right then.

But then he rose. And that changed things. That was something they could see. That was a victory they could touch and talk with and laugh with. And he forgave them. And he sent the Spirit to them to open to them the scriptures and all that he had taught them.

And so they went to their deaths proclaiming a victory. And as they died, “God what are you doing?” Was he, is he, still at work? We die just as much as anyone else, the pews are shrinking, the world is crazy... ‘God what are you doing?’

But don't you hear ourselves. We've already asked that question as have Christians for all time. And each time, God has shown his power and mighty right hand to save. And that is not a blind faith. No, it's just the opposite, it's a faith based on the fact that God is capable and has worked to save before, even when his people couldn't see it.

God is at work, he is at work to save now. In water, In word, In bread and wine.

His Word goes forth and does not return empty, word of the Son of Abraham who's death and resurrection changed the world, all of it, as he promised a scared

pharisee who came to him an night. And that goodness has come to you, it is no accident. You may be beset with pain, doubt, fear, and surrounded by death, it may be all you can see, but that does not change the reality of God's work that he has done for you to forgive you, redeem you, and make you an heir of eternal life. God at work. God be praised.