

Lutheran Church of the Master
580 Kuhn Road, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188
Curt Gerald, Interim Pastor
February 27/28, 2010
Second Sunday in Lent
“When God calls, we _____ ?”

Genesis 12:1-11 (New International Version)

Genesis 12

The Call of Abram

¹ The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

² "I will make you into a great nation
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."

⁴ So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. ⁵ He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

⁶ Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring ^[a] I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

⁸ From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. ⁹ Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

Luke 10 (New International Version)

Jesus Sends Out the Seventytwo

¹ After this the Lord appointed seventy-two ^[a] others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ² He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

The story in Genesis says that Abram set out and continued toward the Negev. Do you think he knew where he was going? When we teach the Hebrew Scriptures, we say that patriarchal history begins with Genesis 12 --- that Genesis 1-11 is prehistory and not really "history" at all -- - if anything, we might call it theology since it deals with the WHO of creation and not the HOW of creation ... and then in Genesis 12:1-3, this guy named Abram for no apparent reason says or is said to have a conversation with God in which God says "pack it up and get out of town" ... so the text says that at the age of 85 "...So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.⁵ He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there."

Do you really think it was that simple? Can't you imagine Sarai, his wife, asking Abram if he was feeling well ... or if the pizza had upset his stomach ... or if there was something he couldn't tell her about ... don't you imagine that his relatives and friends thought he was stressed out and needed to take a chill pill or something?

And on top of it all ... Abram couldn't even say where he was going to take the family ... they had no destination in mind (which is fine for a family vacation in a car with air conditioning and GPS and good maps and a good balance on the credit card) ... but there were no moving vans or cattle trucks ... and the journey was on foot ... and could you imagine what would happen if you missed your corner (and having been in Israel I now know that off the roads the rocky hills don't have a lot of paths to follow) ...

And 2000 years later, the landscape hadn't changed much when Jesus is commissioning the first Stephen Ministers and sending them out into the same hills along the same river and saying: "GO!" He makes no promises, there is no security, and he even says there are dangers. But he simply says: "its harvest time ... go."

There is no indication in either text that anyone had been looking for this call ... seemingly out of nowhere Abram receives it ... and into nowhere Jesus sends them. Those 72 may have been good friends ... people impressed with what Jesus was doing ... like folks in the last campaign who were impressed with one of the presidential candidates and wanted to go to work for them to get them elected ... and once the campaign gets going and once the number of candidates is reduced ... then the staffers travel from east to west and from north to south and from coast to coast in order to get their candidate elected.

Generally speaking, people don't ask for a call ... all we can do is to be open for a call. Generally speaking, we don't write our own orders ... orders come from those higher up in the ranks of whatever organization we are a part of.

Calls seldom come at convenient times;
Calls often are received with fear, frustration, and a need for clarification;
Calls are usually only understood by the one or ones being called; and
Calls are often only confirmed "in the review mirror."

Being sent is something only known or experienced by a servant;
Being sent does not always answer all the questions that the sent ones might have;
Being sent normally indicates that someone with a greater perspective has a plan ... and this is part of it;
Being sent may be a temporary assignment ... or a longer life long appointment ... but in a way it means that the one who is sent unpacks just enough to function but keeps the moving boxes close at hand.

I remember the family at Zion Lutheran Church who worked for the "twin circles" and rural farming organization ... they showed me their basement ... some boxes were still marked from previous moves ... they had moved 11 times in 12 years.

I remember the call process in a my former congregation ... the congregation felt that it had been called to get a new contemporary service going on the North Shore ... at least that is what they said in the call process ... so we started it ... literally, I started it with them by sitting at the piano and playing the songs ... getting the LCD ... but the congregation was not sure ... even though no one had to come to that hour, even though it would only be an invitation for those not in worship to join us in worship ... the folks just didn't approve of "that ... not there ... not then!"

So we went into analysis paralysis ... and by the time we really got behind this ... Willow Creek started the same thing ¼ of a mile from our place ... at the first service they had over 800 people in attendance.

That is part of the call too ... immediate response is sometimes needed ... and if the one who is called hesitates ... then God will move on another person. God has work to do ... and God will do whatever God needs to do in order to get God's will and work done!

This weekend is about being called and being sent for all of us in general ... I hope each of you here this evening/morning is able to talk about your life and life's work as a calling ... and in particular it is about the calling of one who has been a significant servant in this congregation for a couple of years.

We'll hear about Jim's call in a few minutes ... and we know that while there is a group of folks in another ministry nearby who are excited about his coming ... there is a group of folks in this congregation who don't like to see him go.

But ... having become convinced that this Call is from God ... go he must ... and send him off we will ... knowing that ministry there and here continues to be God's and not ours ... and sensing that God knows about it all in the first place.

From the ELCA website:

Vocation

From the Latin word for “call,” the word refers to our many callings as God’s baptized people — whatever our places and opportunities in life, we are called to serve others with love. Martin Luther emphasized, for example, that a shoemaker, a father changing a diaper and a pastor preaching a sermon are all called by God to serve in the roles in which they find themselves.

What are you passionate about? Whether you are called to be a factory worker, a pastor, or a volunteer tutor -- the ELCA can help you live out your vocation in service for the world.

Lutherans believe that we are all living out our "vocations" in the ways we help our neighbors and share the love of Christ with them. And this church has limitless opportunities to become a leader in this call to service.

No matter what your path in life, we can help you put your passion to work.

What is our passion? If we are 8, 18, 81, or 108 ... our passion is our calling ... and that calling continues until we finally rest from our labors when we check in to the Heavenly Hilton.