

Day Five

Scripture:

Genesis 12:1-7

Reflection:

One of the things best things about holidays is the gathering of families. In earlier times, most grown-up children would have continued to live within a few miles of where they were born. Family gatherings were still enjoyable back then, of course. But, in today's world with people often going away to college and living hundreds or even thousands of miles from where they grew up, family gatherings are extra special times.

One of the things many of us remember about Christmases past is crowding together with our folks, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Many times, the kids end up sleeping on the floor (something that only made the times seem more like an adventure). Rooms filled with chattering adults, playing toddlers, laughing teenagers, and all of it permeated with the rich smells of desserts and baking bread and roasting meats.

When God calls Abram (later his name is changed to Abraham), it is linked to families. God tells Abram to leave his own family. That must have been painful. But, God promises Abram that his own family will become a "great nation" (Genesis 12:2).

Of course, this will not happen all at once. First, there is the leaving. The ornament reminds us that Abraham has to

leave his nice home and travel. He will travel so much he will need to live in a tent. Before God gives Abram his own family, God tells him to leave his own family behind. When we think of Christmas, we think about people heading home. For Abram, his story begins with leaving home. Sleeping in a tent might be fun for a weekend camping trip, but think about trying to live in a tent all the time. No kitchen. No bedroom. No bed! No bathroom! Yuck. It would not be fun.

Throughout the unfolding story of the Jesse tree, we will encounter many times when people have to take the first step of loss, the decision of risk, that leaving, long before we come to those moments of gain, reward, and cleaving. The question is not just, "Do you believe?" as much as it is, "Will you move?" or "Will you risk?" or "Will you give these things up now to have greater things later?"

When God wants to bring people, he first sends people. When God wants to show us about our true home, he starts by calling on some of us to leave our homes. When God wants to bless every family on the earth by building a great nation, he begins by sending a handful of people away from their families to a land they have never seen. For the rest of his life, the only piece of land Abraham will buy is a small hill with a cave in it. This is where he and Sarah will be buried.

Family:

Moving is sometimes fun. But, it is also sometimes very sad. Have everyone imagine that, when they got up this morning, it was announced that the whole family had to move far away. Pretend somebody from the government

called the house last night and told everyone they had to pack up and move today. This person on the phone did not say tell us where we are going, only that we have to pack up and leave.

What would be exciting about this? Yes, it is an adventure. Maybe a chance to see new places. It might be near Disneyworld. Or perhaps it will be up in the beautiful mountains. But, you don't know. You just know it will be far, far away from where you live right now.

What would be sad about this? You have time to tell your neighbors and friends good-bye. But, after that, you do not know when you will ever see them face to face again. And, you do not know if there will be any new friends where you are going. Maybe we will be in the middle of miles of fields and mountains. A house all by itself with nobody living close. Or, we might be in the center of a big city with lots of police sirens and gangs that make it dangerous to go outside and play.

One big question everyone will ask is, "Do we have to move?" I mean, just because somebody from the government called the house and told us to move, does that mean we have to? There are two big things to think about to answer that question:

First, what kind of authority does the person who called here have to make us move? Is it somebody from the FBI or a local member of the town council? Some people have more authority than others.

Second, why are they telling us to move? Do they want to buy our house and land to give to a relative? Or, are they worried about us and our safety and they found out there is

a hidden underground volcano right under our house that is going to blow up next week (there isn't)? So, is the phone call because people in government want to keep us all safe? That would make a big difference, wouldn't it?

When God tells Abraham to leave his home and travel to the Promised Land, Abraham knows that God is the boss of everybody. God can ask us to do something, and we better do it. Abraham also believes that God will take care of him. He knows God will bless him, just like God promised. Just before Jesus is born, Mary and Joseph leave their home in Nazareth and take a long trip all the way to Bethlehem. They leave their hometown and their families. Just like Abraham, they have to trust that God will take care of them.

Prayer:

This promise is all about trusting and obeying God. In your prayer time, ask that everyone might learn to trust God more, even when they cannot know for sure what will happen tomorrow. Like taking a long trip, we learn to trust God one step at a time, one day at a time. Ask everyone to think of one thing they could trust God for today – try to recall some of the promises God has made that we can learn to depend on. Thank God Abraham and Sarah believed God enough to leave their home. Not only them but remember Mary and Joseph trusted God so that Jesus could make come and make a home for us.