

Sermon 06-07-2026

"Voyaging into Deep Spaces in our Enterprise of Faith" – Rev. Markus Wegenast
Genesis 12:1-5b

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."^[a]

⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵ Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot and all the possessions that they had gathered and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran, and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.

1)

Last Sunday we had Psalm 8 at the center of our worship. Psalm 8 talks about the greatness of God and creation. In order to get a sense for the vastness of God's creation and the universe I talked to you about my passion for the Star Trek TV series. We used the USS voyager spaceship and its long journey to get a sense for how big the milky way galaxy and the universe is.

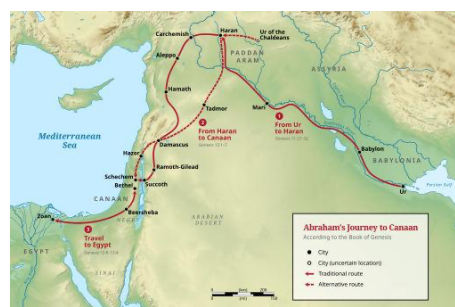
I really enjoyed talking about science fiction with you and I can't tell you how many conversations about the Star Trek universe I had after the services! Maybe that all is a bit unspiritual, but I have to say: If Star Trek gets people excited about a sermon – then I regard that as a blessing!

I must still have been under the influence of Star Trek talk when I came up with today's sermon title: "Voyaging into Deep Spaces in our Enterprise of Faith"

But you will see, it's a title that actually really honors the depth of the Bible passage that is at the heart of today's service.

Last Sunday we talked about the voyage of the fictional spaceship USS Voyager that had to travel 70,000 light years to make its way from one side of our galaxy back home to earth. Today we follow the voyage of Abraham. It's a much more humble voyage, measuring a mere 1200 miles. And yet, the voyage of Abraham is of greatest significance. Because Abram traveled from Ur in Chaldea to what would become the holy land, all of our lives and the lives of billions of people throughout history changed. Let's take a look...

2)



Abram grew up in Ur which is a city in today's Iraq (Kuwait?) 12 hundred miles away from what would become Israel. The Bible doesn't tell us his childhood story, it gives us only a spotted biography. Abraham's dad, his name was Terach, left Ur and traveled to Haran, some 600 miles away. We don't really know why Terach left Ur, all we know is that Abram's dad moved his entire large household including livestock, possessions and many servants to Haran and that's from where Abram's journey begins. It was all part of God's plan.

God's plan. We really need to talk about God's plan. We are in the 12th chapter of the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. The first eleven chapters of the Bible contain marvelous and super important stories, like the creation of the world, the explanation how humanity no longer is what it was meant to be, the tower of Babel and the most shocking stories of all: the flood and Noah's ark. (evtl. point out that it covered the whole area on the screen and maybe much more.)

In the 21st century we are a bit spoiled by the neat way this story is often given to us in cute picture books and beautifully decorated nurseries with rainbows and animals. But the reality of the story is terrible. Humankind had become so corrupt that God needed to push a big reset button and decided to flood his entire creation on planet earth. For the tender hearted among us - and maybe even for those with pretty thick skin, this story is a hard pill to swallow.

I believe though we really need to swallow this pill in order to understand the magnitude of the story of Abraham.

See, God destroyed his entire creation except for Noah's family and a bunch of animals. Not because he's such a violent God, but because conditions got so out of control. At the end of the story, we hear a very sobering voice of scripture where God states that the human heart is just what it is – in this world, we are not naturally good people, our hearts have a bent toward going wild. 5000 years of recorded history are a sober and sad testimony for that.

Let's be clear: The Bible doesn't say that us humans are bad – it states that left without guardrails we tend to make a mess out of living together. And friends, I find this is spot on anthropology even if you don't believe in God or have never opened the Bible!

That's why God calling Abraham out on a new voyage is such a big deal. With Abraham God goes on a new adventure. He is approaching a new final frontier. In Abraham God shows us that he wants to go into deep spaces of the human heart. Through Abraham God wants to start an entirely new enterprise of inviting all people to have faith in God, just as Abraham will have. And it all starts with this sentence:

Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. – Genesis 12:1b

This is the beginning of a new chapter and voyage of God with us people. According to the Bible the main effort of God in the world is to get us people back to him. God recognizes that our hearts have an inclination to sin and be apart from him, but he will not give up on us because of that. Even the violent flood story and the destruction of the tower of babel are all stories that show us God's ways to bring us people back to him.

While in the first 11 chapters of the Bible God's ways with humankind are very universal, in Genesis 12, there is a major shift. God becomes much more personal and deep with us now. God now focuses on one family, the family of Abraham to start something new. When God calls Abram to leave Haran his family doesn't even exist yet because Abraham doesn't have any kids with Sarai yet. But it is their future family through which God will bring all of humanity back to him. Out of Abraham and Sarah's family will one day come a messiah through which God offers saving faith to all people.

But we're not there yet, we are here, at the very beginning of that story where God decides to go deep. So let me pause right here and ask you:

Do you ever have a sense that God wants to go deep with you?!

What does that even mean – for God to want to go deep with you? For me it means that God, the creator of a universe so vast that not even 21st century measurement tools can fathom it, is so much in love with us that he comes down into the nooks and crannies of our ordinary lives.

Imagine: this God is waiting for you each day anew to spend time with him! The God of supernovas, black holes, colliding galaxies and imploding stars is the God who cares so deeply for us that he wants to write a story with each of us. And for this he takes his time. The flood lasted less then a year, but bringing humanity back to the arms of God will be a story of centuries.

God takes his time and goes deep with Abraham on a personal level until his own son Jesus would come out of this family some 1700 years later. God took his time. Nobody knows why God did it that way. Nobody knows why God didn't send his son into the world right away, like after the flood, or even right after Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden. Nobody knows. For some reason, God took his time...God took his time...

Someone once told me this:

“If you want to go fast, do it yourself, if you want to go deep, recruit a committee!”

While there is a bit of irony and sarcasm in it, there is also a lot of truth in it. Yes, committee work can be super boring and super difficult as you have to manage the personalities and likes and dislikes of many people. But the fastest and most convenient way is not always the best way. When we work together sometimes

things take longer but we are doing what God has created us for: for each other and with each other!

➤ **God involves us!**

God did not create us to be lone wolves and for us to figure out how to not be lone wolves and work together – that takes time!

God did not call a committee to begin the story of the Good News, he called a person, a person that would bring forth more persons with his wife Sarah, a great committee with differing opinions sometimes even leading to civil war but God stuck with it. God did not quit, he continued to go deep until he went to the very deepest expression the universe could have ever imagined: He came to us in Jesus!

3)

It is both amazing and terrifying to realize that this is how God operates in our world and in our lives. He is not a hidden God, he is fully present, deeply involved, and he bids us to go on the voyages of our lives in the great enterprise of faith.

Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. – Genesis 12:1b

This huge overwhelming task did not come without a promise – two promises actually:

I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. – Genesis 12:2

Friends, I'm not suggesting that if you are willing to go where God sends you God promises to fulfill all your wishes – that's not what happened to Abraham. But his voyage shows us that in this complicated world we have a God who wants to go deep with us – not superficial. I want to invite you, give yourself to God once again or maybe for the first time today, As we celebrate holy communion, claim that enterprise of living out faith in God. May you become a blessing for the people around you – just like Abraham was. Amen.