

He set out, not knowing where he was going

Beginning of the story,

Beginning of History.

If you pay close attention there are actually two beginnings in the Bible:

The beginning of the world: myths, garden, snakes,

giants,

floods.

And there is the beginning of God's people:

Abraham, setting out from the land of Haran,

not knowing where he was going.

I guess, it's the same in our lives,

there are always two beginnings.

When we are born, obviously,

and yet probably as important, there is a coming of age story.

And it usually how it looks like: to set out, not knowing where we are going.

It can be literal, like going to college, but it's mostly spiritual

It starts with questioning.

Well, that's what happens to Abraham. He starts questioning.

His family, his land, his tradition, his religion.

It's a coming of age at no age

75 years old.

75 years old, and here he is: looking for another inheritance than his owns'.

Abraham is the *Father of the believers* so we say.

Watch him:

He's certainly not the Father of the secure and the know it all.

Maybe he liked it to take risks, but maybe

he was just curious.

Curious about God.

In his seventies. When you'd think you could at last get

Comfortable,

Wise,

Settled.

Abraham is starting all over again and, actually he will become the Father of believers by

forgetting everything about his own beliefs.

By entering a foreign land.

Desiring a better country.

So I guess the author of the Letter to the Hebrews has it right,

It's not so much about *belief* than it is about *faith*,

an assurance and a conviction

- Not a definitive certainty or an intellectual judgment -

A living assurance and conviction.

The assurance and conviction that the sky is big

filled with many stars

that there is something more to find out about life than what we can see,

than there is bigger life, that God is

bigger than the statuettes of pagan religion

bigger than the gadgets of modern world

and even bigger than a country, a family and traditions.

The Rev. Fanny Belanger

Sunday, August 7

Proper 14

Genesis 15:1-6

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Luke 12:32-40

All our texts today speak about faith, and what they say to us is that

Faith

is not so much clinging to something than letting go

Faith is not so much clinging to something than letting go.

It begins when you start to truly listen to God,

when you start to look for God,

look forward to God with curiosity, excitement, eagerness.

In Genesis, Abraham is growing very impatient about the fulfillment of God's promise.

He has stars in his eyes – almost literally.

Abraham leaves the religion of his father not to rebel against him but to start his own

conversation with God.

A new beginning, a new story starts – The story between this man and his God.

The story of men and God.

The story of a dialogue, a covenant but also of a struggle.

I picked this picture of a prophet for our bulletin today because this is the way I see Abraham -

all his senses opened, we don't know if he raises his hands to talk

or asks for silence for better listening.

He's attentive, like the slaves in our parable today.

Attentiveness: That's what it is with faith, that's the key.

Jesus makes a strange promise in our Gospel, he says

If the disciples know how to anticipate, how to watch out, to listen up -

Their Master will come home not be served, but to serve them.

I was thinking, in a way, Jesus promises his disciples that they will be smarter than their masters!

Of course, there is a whole tradition of slaves smarter than their masters.

Moliere: The lazy bourgeois manipulated by the witty maids.

The ones acting on stage not knowing about the way they are manipulated by their servants,

The masters are the actual puppets of the show.

Well, I am not sure this exactly what Jesus meant but for sure, he is talking about

liberation

The philosopher Hegel had a whole theory about it: The Master-slave dialectic.

Hegel said: Yes, the Master has the power but *the one who serves understand what happens behind the curtains.*

When you use your hands – you understand how the world works,

you may not have a PhD, but you know how to get by.

And in the process, you achieve more than the powerful one who does nothing -

who takes no risks, has no accident but also

has no curiosity, and makes no discovery.

The slaves in the parable, the ones Jesus points to as an example, they are

curious, hopeful, like Abraham they want to get going.

There is not sitting around on their treasures: They spend money for their travel.

And so of course they end up smarter than their Masters, or at least they are

made free

and that's why

Jesus is smart of course and presents himself as a servant,

Jesus will be the one serving at the table.

Before Abraham was, I am says Jesus in John's Gospel.

Jesus shows us the face of God that Abraham discovered:

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer.

God is on the side of those who, instead of exercising their power,
are making a way

making purses from themselves with a different currency than the currency of this world.

But it takes time to discover this God – that's what Abraham finds out.

It takes time to walk the path,

To live out our eagerness for God in faithfulness.

Abraham will learn the hard way how to be both burning with desiring and patient in persevering.

Oh, he will make some mistakes.

Abraham is a point in his life where he is stuck.

Wants a child, and it's not only a personal desire, he thinks it's God's will to give him an offspring
and so he needs to do something about it.

He does what we all do when we get weary, disappointed, when the wait is too long

We do what we can to sort out the situation

to find an exit.

And so Abraham will try many things, but mainly

he will get his servant Hagar pregnant!

God will have to remind Abraham that his son will be the real thing, the son of his wife

The barren old lady – a crazy plan.

(how ironic it is we think God has chosen Abraham when obviously

God has first chosen Sarah: God wants *Sarah* to be the mother.)

Yet in spite of his wanderings, Abraham is faithful because he keeps looking for a way,

He is looking for God, even if he makes mistakes.

That's what his story and then History is all about: Men walk in foreign lands and God shows up
into their homes,

both looking to meet at some point, to make a covenant.

The Bible looks like our lives, it's in the same time Men' plans and God's plans.

And women' plans, and of course:

Slaves' plans.

We often forget the parallel promise God will make to Hagar in the wilderness.

Rejected by Abraham, the angel of God promises to Hagar *I will so greatly multiply your offspring that
they cannot be counted for multitude*

Sometimes, God just goes with it.

God yields, you see.

Maybe Hagar was not plan A for God, but she does not become plan B.

Hagar gets the same as Abraham, as Sarah did.

God finds a way in the wilderness and the barrenness for Abraham and Sarah,

and God finds a way for Hagar too.

God yields to them all, not because they express a whim,

God yields because of their absolute trust in him.

Men and women become faithful as God is faithful and *God is faithful as they are full of faith.*

Yes, if we trust God as Jesus tells us, he will be the Master who comes and serves us.

And this is the story of it all,

the story about how Abraham becomes twice a father, Ishmael and Isaac,

and a Father to Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Three religions, but called to live out the same faith.

Faith is setting out *not knowing where you are going*.

Looking for God

Making your own way, through or beyond your own culture and history and on this way God finds you.

As Christians, we believe that God chose a special way to come and meet us in Jesus.

That's our belief – and we all do believe it's true.

Christ is the way and the truth

it does not mean *our religion is always the only way and the only truth*.

The way and the truth aren't a text – would it be the text of the Bible.

The way and the truth are the Word incarnated, it happens in the flesh

at the crossing between man and God, Jesus, but also with each one of us.

God in our lives, among us, God happens inside of us.

Abraham was neither a Jew, a Christian or a Muslim and yet Jesus will say of Abraham

he saw my day and rejoiced (John 8)

In Jesus we get to know the word of God,

The word of God by whom the world was created.

Jesus is God's very expression, this very expression who speaks

at the beginning before the beginning.

And so God is big enough to meet us where we are, in religions

cultures, philosophies,

people – the poor and the weak, the educated and the artists,

some people end up meeting God without religion, just by living their lives

discovering what life is all about.

Christ is life, in Christ the whole world was made.

God is big enough to meet us where we are if we live in faith – faithfulness, openness, curiosity, desire, the joyous anticipation of the servants.

Faith isn't about clinging to something, it's about hearing a voice and decide to follow.

Wandering and wondering.

All those who wander aren't lost...and maybe even, some are found on the way.

How is our curiosity about God these days?

Well, we live in a society where we want to do a lot of experiences -

Travels, foods, leisure and so on,

and of course God is part of the picture – at least religions, churches.

Also, the on going terrorism leads us to ask ourselves a lot of questions.

The thing is – we want to discover and to understand -

but we don't know how to remain faithful to our own path with God,

to persevere in listening how God is talking to us personally and in our own religion.

Starting this Sunday,

I invite you to explore a little further, looking at other religions with Adam Hamilton.

Each week, we will hear successively about Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism

to engage a dialogue and find out how God speaks to people in different contexts.

In the meantime, we will also try to understand better our own way in Christianity.

In a spirit of curiosity but also faithfulness,

hopefully we will be in our search

Both desiring and persevering,

as our Father Abraham was before us. Amen.