

Sermonette for Pentecost 12 (Series C)
Preached on 08-12-2007

The Text: Genesis 15:1-6

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars-- if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

The Introduction Draws Our Attention:

“What are you afraid of?” asks your father as you try to muster up the courage to put a leech on your fish hook for the first time. “What are you afraid of?” asks your date as he tries to coax you to come over when his parents are gone. “What are you afraid of?” asks your co-worker when you refuse to go out bar-hopping with the guys. Oftentimes that question, “What are you afraid of?” is nothing more than a putdown, a way to make someone feel bad for not living up (or down) to someone else’s standards.

Yet, that question, “What are you afraid of?” is still a valid one. For example, college students can be afraid of not being able to handle the workload this upcoming school year. Young couples can be afraid of never having the baby they’ve been praying so hard for. Older adults can be afraid of getting laid off and having to find a job that is comparable in salary. The elderly can be afraid of hearing the dreaded news, “You have terminal cancer”, forcing them to face the reality of dying. No matter what stage of life you are in, we all have certain things we are afraid of. And yet, God knows our fears. More than that...

Theme: God Calms Our Fears!

The Historical Context & Biblical Text:

Abram’s fears were perfectly natural. We’re told that, “**The Word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram’**” (v. 1). What did Abram have to be afraid of? Maybe he was

afraid of this vision from God. Down through the centuries, a lot of people had been frightened by sudden, unexpected appearances of the Lord. Each and every time, God calmed their fears by saying, “Do not be afraid.” Or maybe Abram was afraid because he had just returned from routing the armies of four different kingdoms. He could have feared, then, a retaliatory attack. We’re told specifically what Abram was afraid of. He feared that God was not going to keep His promise to give him a son. He said, **“O Sovereign LORD, what can You give me since I remain childless” (v. 2)?**

Not only had God promised Abram a son, He also promised that his descendents would become a great nation (**Genesis 12:2**). Those promises, however, were made a long time ago. It was easy for Abram, therefore, to wonder, “What’s going on here, Lord? Have I made You angry somehow? Maybe I was a fool for ever believing You would give me a son!” What prompted these questions? What caused Abram to doubt God’s promises? Satan was behind it all! He was working just as hard as he did when he tempted our first parents, Adam and Eve, to doubt God’s love for them. Remember how he asked, “Did God really say that? You don’t really believe that, do you? God’s trying to keep something from you. You can’t trust Him.”

The Application Proclaims Law (Sin) & Gospel (Grace):

Satan is planting those same doubts in our hearts today: “You can’t trust God! Why should you believe in Him? If there really is a god up there; if he really does care for you, then why are there so many bad things happening in your life?” These are questions, doubts, and fears that we all wrestle with from time to time. When we say that our fears are perfectly natural, that doesn’t mean that they are good or God-pleasing. All fear is really a lack of trust in the Lord and therefore sin. So long as a sinful nature resides in us, there will be times when we don’t trust God as we should. There are times when we are overcome by worry, doubt, anxiety, and fear.

Still, *God Calms Our Fears!* Whether we fear not making it through school; being on our own for the first time; never getting pregnant; not finding a job; becoming sick; or even dying, God has promised to help us through all these real-life struggles. He has promised to never give us, **“More than we can bear” (1 Corinthians 10:13)**, to be with us, **“To the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:7)**, and to always send us His holy angels to, **“Protect us in all our ways” (Psalm 91:11)**. These promises cannot be broken either! We can really hang on to them,

trusting that every one of them will be kept. Through these, and countless other promises, *God Calms Our Fears!*

The Conclusion Points Us To Heaven In Christ:

As we consider the faith strengthening promises God has made to us and to Abram, let's not lose sight of the most significant one: That, **“All peoples on earth would be blessed through Abram” (Genesis 12:3)**. In other words, one of Abram's descendants would, in fact, be God's true Son and the Savior of the world. You might say that Jesus Christ is the glue that holds all of God's promises together. Because if God had not kept all His Messianic promises of the Old Testament, then none of His other promises would do us a bit of good. If God had not sent His Son into the world, then we would be eternally lost.

BUT God has kept His greatest promise, the promise of a Savior! Abram trusted in this promise wholeheartedly. Abram's trust resulted in the Lord crediting Jesus' holiness to his account hundreds of years before the Christ Child was ever born. In the same way, our good standing with God is not attained by following some code of ethics. Believing in Jesus is not a conviction that we have come to on our own. Rather, it by God's Grace that we know our Savior at all. Through the Gospel, we now trust that our sins ARE forgiven; that Heaven IS ours! So what on earth is there to be afraid of? Scripture says that, **“Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39)**. So no matter what challenges we face in life; no matter what unknown tragedies await us in the future, we have the unbreakable promises of God to fall back on. Through all these promises, *God Calms Our Fears!* Amen!

