

At Valley Presbyterian Church we try very hard to be non-partisan. There are a variety of Churches who are extremely political. What I have come to believe over the years is that people come to worship GOD with a great deal on their souls, terminal diseases, unresolved issues, family matters, mental illness, loss, the daily joys and struggles of life. Partisan politics has no place in that and easily segregates us. That said, there are events in history which are moral and ethical CIRCUMSTANCES OF FAITH, which we need to consider and pray about. When Pearl Harbor was bombed. When President Kennedy was assassinated. When the World Trade Center was destroyed. COVID19. The killing of George Floyd. These were LYNCHPINS in history; which if we do not consider as matters of faith, only become another event in that progress; or A CALLING TO QUESTION what we have allowed and what we want to be? I believe Former Vice President Pence named this well, when he described this as a SAD DAY IN OUR AMERICAN HISTORY. Regardless of your Politics, this is a SAD DAY IN OUR HISTORY, that needs to become a LYNCHPIN.

The Call of Abram is a LYNCHPIN, with on-going CONNECTION to /while naming MAJOR CHANGE from Genesis 1: GOD Commissioning ALL HUMANITY to be Co-CREATORS with GOD, to fill the Earth, fed by Plants & Trees. Where in 10 Chapters, HUMANITY broke TRUST with GOD, turning away to ACT SELFISHLY; in the next generation, becoming so ENVIIOUS of one another as to MURDER one of our own Family; later generations becoming so distant from GOD that GOD destroyed CREATION in a Flood, to Begin again; the first act AFTER of NOAH was to plant a vineyard getting so DRUNK as to cause SHAME and DIVISION. Where PEOPLE were to Follow & Trust GOD, they instead SETTLED building a STAIRWAY to HEAVEN.

This CHANGE recognizes GOD as CO-CREATOR with ALL HUMANITY who were not following GOD... Now that there were separate Languages, Tribes, separate Nations and Places... GOD chose ABRAM to FOLLOW where GOD would lead. There is no indication, Abram was any different from anyone else, any better or worse, Simply GOD looked with FAVOR on ABRAM, GOD CALLED and they Went With GOD.

GOD gave to Abram a 3 fold Promise, in 2 Parts... What I mean is that GOD's CALL is both FROM and GOD's CALL TO. Abram is CALLED FROM your COUNTRY, from your PEOPLE and from your Father's HOUSE. GOD's CALLING is also TO A GREAT LAND I AM to show you, to BECOME A GREAT NATION; to BE BLESSED. This is the subtlety of a "CALLING", as our Ancestors were called from famine, war, to a new Nation; we were called from our Ancestral Community/the Place of our Career identity, our Parents/Family/Children to become something different than we had been or had been certain of before. We are CALLED from Certainty and being Settled, Knowing and being Known, to GO WITH GOD in search to become WITH GOD.

The full-embodiment of this relationship comes with the Incarnation, when GOD CHOOSES EMMANUEL: TO BE ONE WITH US, to Be GOD WITH US.... Rather than our Following GOD, but this starts with Trust. At this LYNCHPIN, the relationship goes from GOD Offering for us to be CO-CREATORS to FILL CREATION, and our being unable/unwilling/ Not receiving GOD's BLESSING; to GOD CALLING to Follow, to Witness, to be FILLED OUT, to BE BLESSED and become a Blessing to others.

This is a very subtle shift, because the Builders of the Babel Tower had attempted to make a Great Name for themselves, where here, GOD offers to MAKE THEIR NAME GREAT.

There is also a shift with this LYNCHPIN from the 3<sup>rd</sup> PERSON for GOD: GOD Commanded, and GOD Saw; GOD Walked in the Garden; GOD told Noah; GOD hung up his Bow as a Warrior; GOD came down to see what they were doing building a Tower; suddenly to offer a 5-fold Promise ALL IN 1<sup>st</sup> Person: "I will make of you a great Nation; I will Bless you; I will magnify your Name; I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you."

The CALL seems impossible, because time and again God will affirm ABRAM becoming the Father of Nations and ABRAM is at least 75 years of age, his partner Sarai only slightly younger and they have never yet conceived. How many of us at 60 or 75 or 100, are willing and interested in getting Pregnant and raising a child at this age? This is where the LYNCHPIN shifts from CREATION to PROMISE, because the CALL is not about something that has been, or something we know and we can expect, A CALLING is from what seems IMPOSSIBLE; to PROMISE of FULFILLMENT!

The difficulty of a Calling, is there is no guarantee against problems, not an inoculation against suffering... Baptism does not prevent Heart Disease, or COVID... Marriage does not inoculate against hardship. ABRAM and his family following GOD:

will travel among people who do not follow GOD,

over and over their marriage will be tested,

they will know not having their future in their control as when Sarai tries to force Hagar to conceive a child

they will know the jealousy of Hagar's child being firstborn before their child Isaac;

they will know the pain of sending Hagar and Ishmael away;

they will know the pain of sacrificing their child Isaac, sacrificing fulfillment of the promise...

YET, through all the generations that follow, Abram's family will trust the CALL, follow where GOD Leads.

Have you experienced a CALLING?

Realize as we have said: A CALLING is both From what we have known; to SOMETHING UNKNOWN;

A Calling is not to anything within our Control;

A CALLING is to know GOD Differently from 3<sup>rd</sup> Person to 1<sup>st</sup>,

to be Open to receive GOD's Blessing and to become a BLESSING TO OTHERS.

There are believers, for whom, the CALLING is at a specific date and time, when they know they are Called.

For others of us, there are a series of CALLS which offer different understandings than we knew before.

When I was Called to go to Seminary, I then had to determine and prove to others,

ARE YOU CALLED TO BECOME A MINISTER, of 100 in our Class, 50 were;

ARE YOU CALLED TO BE A PASTOR of that 50, 40 were;

ARE YOU CALLED TO BE A PRESBYTERIAN PASTOR of that 40, only 3 were.

Then there was decision, called a CALLING, of what congregation you were called to and why?

At each subsequent CALL, what skills and beliefs you learned and how those might lead the next...

Then we came to Green Valley and realized that all the experiences of past CALLS equipped us for today.

Some may have been hard, but those were preparation for the needs of who we are in this time and place.

As Jesus responded in the Garden before the Arrest and Crucifixion, having come for this purpose in life, when the CUP is offered shall I say "No Lord, get someone else?"

As a Nation, as a People of GOD, who will we CHOOSE to BE in this moment?

What are you called to? Even if it seems impossible? How are we Called today?

Will we follow where God leads?