

The Missionary Heart of God

"Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans. And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren; she had no child. Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran. 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. And 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. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" (Genesis 11:27–12:3 ESV)

The Story of Abram is a story of God's heart for mission. He sovereignly involves us in that mission and we see how that changes everything.

MAIN POINT: *We become the most like Jesus when we join the missionary heart of God to move out, into the unknown, to be a blessing to Bay Ridge and beyond.*

THREE POINTS:

- Terah's Tragedy
- Abram's Hope
- The Ultimate Blessing

Terah's Tragedy

"Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot...Now Sarai was barren; she had no child. Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there." (Genesis 11:27, 30-31 ESV)

- Read the Bible like a story plot, like a play, Ascents and descents, peaks and valleys. In hopelessness here
- Hopelessness of Abram (brief fly-by of Genesis 1-12)
 - Creation / Fall / Genesis 3:15
 - "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15 ESV)
 - Not Abel - dead
 - Not Cain - cursed and sent away
 - But Seth...this is who the lineage will follow for the remainder of the Bible
 - The story looks promising:
 - "To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD" (Genesis 4:26 ESV)
 - One ray of hope to conquer evil in the world - through this family the knowledge of God was passed on, from it will come hope that someone will be born, offspring/seed...who will crush the serpent's head
 - Narrative descent
 - The Great Flood and Noah
 - The Tower of Babel and separation
 - We are going east of eden
 - When we understand 11:27, we see the hopelessness

- SPIRITUALLY DISOBEDIENT- VS. 27 - Terah - means moon - Ur of the Chaldees was the center of lunar worship for thousands of years¹, Haran from very ancient times, some of the earliest known records was from a lunar temple there, and pagan worship continued there for 3,000 years or more, until the 11th century AD.
- So, the one family that was supposed to know and share the True God has gone over to idol worship
 - "And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods" (Joshua 24:2 ESV)
- PHYSICALLY STALLED- Sarai was barren (vs. 30) - the lineage is ending
 - She is the weakest link² in the family, probably shame accompanied her in her perceived lack of ability to bear a child (in that culture she would have been blamed)
- GEOGRAPHICALLY WAYWARD - (VS. 31) - Terah had some inclination to GO, but stopped at Haran? "Settled here" is the same as the tower of Babel, negative connotations³
 - Canaan = Promised Land, future home of Israel
 - Haran = center of the center of worship of the moon God ⁴
- Human history's connection with God is coming to an end, like the middle of an hourglass, we see the narrowing and narrowing of vision, and everything has ground to a halt. It's a Cul-de-sac, and the narrative is on the brink of ending. This is Terah's tragedy

Abram's Hope

God SPEAKS...breaks the narrowing, the hourglass!

"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. And 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 12:1-2 ESV)

- The hope of God's call changes everything. It restarts the world as we know it. It lights up the story.
- God enters into the scene to BLESS ABRAM with a new commission for His life
 - The sovereign, undeniable, unexplainable grace of God. Abram did nothing to deserve this.
 - He probably had NO IDEA of the God of His forefather Seth...
 - This is why the sovereignty of God is a cool drink of water on a hot day, nothing He could have done.
- VS 1 - "Go"
 - Remember: They were going to Canaan (promised land), but stopped in Haran (land of false gods and familiarity)
 - You...GO⁵
 - Country: leaving a national identity
 - Kindred: leaving an entire community of people dedicated to him, tribe
 - Father's House: leaving his closest relatives, friends, and family
 - MOVE OUT

¹ Hoerth, Alfred. Archaeology and the OT. pgs. 66-72

² "The message is thunderous: the woman is a "weak link," we would say, in the chain of blessing. Her barren state dominates the Abraham story since the divine promises involve a numerous host of progeny for Abram." Mathews, K. A. Genesis 11:27-50:26. Vol. 1B. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005. Print. The New American Commentary.

³ "More important, the language "settled there" echoes the Babel account (11:2, 8-9), where the residents of Shinar refused to "fill" the earth in accord with the divine mandate (1:28; 9:1). This is not to say that Terah's migration was part of the scattering of peoples from Babel. Rather, the language "settled there" is chosen by the author to cast a shadow on Terah's decision to dwell in Haran, and it provides the negative contrast for Abram's faithful answer to the call (12:4). This is one of many ways the faith of Abram and his role in accomplishing the mandate to "fill" the earth are distinguished from those of his Shemite heritage." - Mathews, K. A. Genesis 11:27-50:26. Vol. 1B. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005. Print. The New American Commentary.

⁴ "It was a center for the worship of the moon god." Baker, Warren, and Eugene E. Carpenter. The complete word study dictionary: Old Testament 2003: 381. Print.

⁵ "The command is crisp and stark in its formulation. The ethical dative, "go by yourself" (see n. 1.a.), the use of rhyme (five words in v 2 end in kā "your/you"), and the climactic development—"country ... clan ... father's house"—add punch to the command and emphasize the uncompromising nature of God's words. Abram must leave "his country"; in context (cf. 11:31) this must mean Haran rather than Ur. Coming from Ur, Abram presumably felt less attached to Haran than to his "clan," מוֹלֵדֶת, a grouping intermediate in size between the tribe and extended family, here and elsewhere in the OT called his "father's house" בֵּית אָב, his closest relations. The quick progression from "land" to "father's house" draws attention to the costliness of obedience" Wenham, Gordon J. Genesis 1-15. Vol. 1. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987. Print. Word Biblical Commentary.

- VS 1 - "to the land that I will show you"
 - Uncertainty
 - The whole point, he is told to leave. Abram never sees it, and lives his life in the gap between the promise and reality.
 - BUT, God's been watching Him⁶
 - Acts 7 and Stephen's sermon tells us that God has been watching and calling Abram even before Genesis 12, supervising every move He made...even though Abram had no idea
 - INTO THE UNKNOWN
- VS 2 - "so that you will be a blessing"
 - A radical reorientation. This is how we begin again:
 - Unheard of to bless the world, God's goodness was reserved for the select few descendants of Eve and Seth (Noah)
 - This is the point of the call of Abram. This was the reason for moving out, and astronomical faith needed. God chose Abram to be a missionary to bless the world!
 - TO BE A BLESSING
- MOVE OUT INTO THE UNKNOWN TO BE A BLESSING (x2)
 - Without God's call Abram was spiritually, genealogically, and geographically stagnate and dead. He is by no ways qualified, competent. He is practicing heathen worship, offering up his body and his mind to the false god of the moon, He has forgotten the God of his fathers.
 - But the sovereign call of God is really an introduction and an invitation to Abram: MOVE OUT with me. I am in the wilderness beyond your country, kindred, and family. I am here for you. I am here for the world.. And when you follow me, you will be blessed. The favor of God will rest on you. But you will not be favored to sit. You'll be favored to bless others.
 - You see, the sovereign call of God is always looking outward, to steward His good gifts for the benefit of others. This is the missionary Heart of God...to go where He is...MOVING OUT towards His people (just like He is towards Abram now). And hasn't this been the way? (Adam, Noah, Israel, The Church).
 - BRCC - what does this phrase: move out into the unknown to be a blessing mean for you?
 - 20min drive:
 - 93k people
 - 64% say they do not attend church regularly
 - 66% say they do not affiliate with a religion
 - What does it mean to move out? To reorient your lives to place you in proximity and friendship with those who would never step foot inside of these doors?
 - The Field of Dreams philosophy of "if you build it, they will come" does not work anymore. We have to go to those who don't yet know Jesus.
 - What does it look like to embrace awkwardness and the unknown?
 - What does it look like to bless others with Christ? Explicitly?
 - BUT WAIT: There's more!
- This new hope becomes both the beauty and tragedy of the book of Genesis!
 - The tragedy is that the curse isn't reversed in spite of the mission and blessing of Abram
 - Abram makes major mistakes
 - Death is the reversal of creation. They all die. They all fail miserably.
 - We are still left at the end of Genesis with the ominous shadow of Israel's future enslavement. This doesn't seem like beginning again. This doesn't seem like blessing or hope!
 - The tragedy within us is: We don't naturally move out
 - This is a problem. How do we solve it?

The Ultimate Blessing

⁶ "Stephen's sermon reports that God "appeared" to Abraham before he lived in Haran, showing that the Lord supervised the journey of Abraham, from the beginning at Ur to his final destination in Canaan" Mathews, K. A. Genesis 11:27–50:26. Vol. 1B. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005. Print. The New American Commentary.

"I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"
(Genesis 12:3 ESV)

- THE BLESSING IS IN THE LINEAGE
 - It goes back to one foundational promise. Abram had to have an offspring.
 - The physical barrier was eventually broken. There is a miraculous birth of a son to Abraham and Sarah: Issac.
 - The miraculous birth of Abraham's son Isaac points us to a better, more miraculous birth of a truer Son.
 - Jesus is the Son of God and the True Offspring of Abraham. He is the promise to Eve in the garden. Jesus is the fulfillment of the almost-broken lineage in Genesis 11.
 - "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ" (Galatians 3:16 ESV)
 - Jesus is sent as the ultimate Son to be the ultimate missionary - the ultimate agent of blessing that moved into the world to crush the head of the serpent
 - Jesus call was to MOVE OUT the comfort of His Father's house
 - Jesus went INTO THE UNKNOWN of complete separation from His Father
 - Jesus emptied Himself, sacrificed Himself, laid His body down, to BE THE ULTIMATE BLESSING, crushing the serpent's head, fulfilling the promise of the lineage of Seth.
- THE HEART OF GOD
 - And this ultimate blessing of Jesus shows us the missionary heart of God. It is in HIS NATURE to save us, to pursue us. He is Savior. Which means, somehow, His rescue mission to save us reveals who He is in a way that we never could have known apart from the fall of man
 - Felix Culpa: The fortunate fall. We know God as Savior best in His pursuit of us after the fall
 - "In Book 12 of John Milton's Paradise Lost, the narrative culminates with the aftermath of Adam and Eve's fall. The archangel Michael continues to reveal to Adam the consequences of their disobedience and the future of humanity. Michael shares visions of human history, including the trials and tribulations that will follow the Fall, the coming of Christ as a redeemer, and the ultimate restoration of mankind." Adam proclaims
 - O goodness infinite, Goodness immense!
 - That all this good of evil shall produce,
 - And evil turn to good; more wonderful
 - Than that which creation first brought forth
 - Light out of Darkness!
 - If we believe that Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise, if He embodied the heart of God as a missionary, it illuminates our life. It illuminates the purpose of our lives and it radically re-orient us to live our lives and missionaries you: Jesus went out for you so you can move out for him. He has already been there. He has already ventured into the unknown. He has already done the work. We simply follow in his footsteps.

APPLICATION

- IDENTIFY: Who are your neighbors, coworkers, around you?
- PRAY: Write down a list of names and pray for them daily (Nicky)
- MOVE OUT: Invite someone to your house to share a meal or a coffee, ask them their story
- SHARE: Explicitly ask someone if they have heard about Jesus (T Story + Pic)

ADORATION

- Over and over in Genesis, despite sin, deceit, disobedience, moral failure...that God continues to bless. He continues to heal. He continues to comfort. He continues to infuse hope in a hopeless world. He continues to use the people He has called. The story of Abram is not a story of Abrams faithfulness. It is a story of God's faithfulness to his own call to Abraham.
- And He has called you and is calling you now.
- Mission is the antidote to the exile of the garden. It is the medicine that moves in the world against the poison of sin and selfishness within us and around us.

- And when we move out towards others on mission we become the most like Jesus
 - We become the most like Jesus when we join the missionary heart of God to move out, into the unknown, to be a blessing to Bay Ridge and beyond.
- God is not done with you. He did not save you to be a sponge who soaks up content in church every week. He saved you to be wrung out, that you would be the fragrance of Him in the world.
 - "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Corinthians 2:14-15 ESV)
 - It's hard work, but as we move out to bless the world, God blesses us.
 - You have the mission of Abraham because of the mission of Jesus for you, and we find our hearts are most like Jesus' as we MOVE OUT INTO THE UNKNOWN TO BE A BLESSING