

MIDWEEK ADVENT 2 2020

TEXT: MATTHEW 1: 1-2

THEME: JESUS SON OF ABRAHAM

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. (Mt 1:1-2)

In the name of Jesus:

Many who research their ancestry often hope to discover that they are related to some historical figure. My sainted Aunt Babs was our family historian. She had traced our ancestors back to the 1800's. I looked at what she had discovered, and saw that my family history isn't all that exciting. I have ancestors who were shipbuilders, machinists, and there is even a minister or two thrown in for good measure.

Jesus' family tree in the Gospel of Matthew goes back two thousand years. All the way back to Abraham. If you were to look at Jesus' ancestors as recorded in Luke's Gospel, it goes all the way back to Adam. Jesus' genealogy would thrill the casual observer. But for the average Jew, to trace Jesus' lineage back to Abraham would be a source of great pride for any Jew in Jesus' day. It was Abraham to whom God first gave the Promised Land. But it wasn't the Land that mattered most, it was Jesus, for Matthew in his genealogy

traces Jesus all the way back to Abraham so that we would understand that through Jesus, we inherit the eternal Promised Land.

When God called Abraham and told him that he would be the father of many nations, Abraham thought that this promise was preposterous. Before the call of God, Abraham was a nobody. Joshua in his book describes him as a wandering Aremian. Abraham, who at that time was called Abram, was an unbeliever, an idol worshiper. Yet God called him, by grace, and told him that he would be the father of a great nation. Abram grew to be an old man, and yet, God told Abram that in him all of the nations would be blessed. God would show Abram all of the stars in heaven telling him that such would be the number of his descendants. But Abram and his wife Sarai, were beyond the age of having children. Preposterous would be an understatement.

Yet with God, all things are possible. Abram believed God's Word, took God at His Word, and the Lord counted it to him as righteousness. Abraham had a boy, called him Isaac, and then from Isaac he would have twin boys, Esau and Jacob. Throughout the years Abraham's descendants would grow in number, until a child would be born to a virgin named Mary, in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham.

Those who do research on their ancestry are disappointed that there is really no one famous in their family. The people who are in their family tree are plain, ordinary people. The same is true of Jesus' family tree. Jesus' ancestors were common, ordinary people. There was nothing special about Abraham. Or Sarah for that matter. Sarah had an outward and inward beauty to her, after all she caught the attention of two different kings. Abraham wouldn't stand up to defend the honor of his wife, instead Abraham tried to pass his wife off as his sister. When you look more into the life of Abraham, you discover that Abraham was really like anyone and everyone else, he had his skeletons in the closet. His life was one of lust, lies, deceit and adultery. Abraham was a sinner, just like his forefather Adam.

In Jesus' day and age, there was a special pride in being a son of Abraham. They thought that if one was a descendant of Abraham, they would never be a slave to anyone. Sadly, though, they didn't see that they were slaves to sin and they could not free themselves from their sinful nature. There was only one way for sin to be forgiven. It would not be through animal sacrifices, it would be because God promised to forgive His people because God loved His people. Their faith needed to rest on the promises of God, just like their father Abraham rested on the promises of God.

We are children of Abraham because we, like them, can't be saved by our lineage, our obedience, or our good deeds. Like Abraham, we have failed again and again and we fall into the same sins repeatedly, but Abraham teaches us that even though he was a sinner through and through, he was a man of faith, "fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised." (Rom. 4: 21).

Abraham is a lesson in humility for each and everyone of us. For we don't place our faith in our family history, but rather we place our hope in Jesus, the One born for us. God looked in love upon Abraham and Sarah and promised that one day He would send His Son to be their Savior and the Savior of the world. God spared not His own Son Jesus, but gave Him up as the sacrifice for sin for all.

God's promise to Abraham is fulfilled each and every time a sinner is brought to the font to be baptized. There at the font, the sinner receives the sign of the cross upon the forehead and heart to mark that one by Christ the crucified. There in Baptism sins are forgiven, faith is given, and a child of Abraham is created who believes in the promises of Christ. This promise is for you. It is yours. And like Abraham, you possess it by faith, a faith given, a faith lived out to the glory of God.

During World War II in England, the most ominous sound one could hear was the air raid siren. For a nine-month period between 1940 and 1941, the Germans attacked Britain's airfields and then cities with nightly bombing raids. The sound would start softly but would continue until it reached a spine-tingling trumpet sound. The constant threat of the sirens over those months led to dread every evening as the sun would set. It was during this time that Rev. Eric Milner-White was serving as dean of the famed King's College at Cambridge. Understanding the fear that gripped the people, he wrote a prayer befitting the people's uncertainty: "Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen" (*LSB*, p 311).

These words describe not only the faith of Abraham, they also describe our way of life. We walk by faith and not by sight. Life in the fallen world comes with many and great temptations. We hear the sirens of fear as we worry about doctor's visits and car repairs. We live with anxiety over an uncertain future. But through it all God forgives us for our fears and doubts and through His Word and Sacrament strengthens our faith in Jesus. And by

faith in Jesus we live, walking by faith to the Promised Land that He has prepared for His children, waiting for Him who is faithful to keep His Promise and giving witness to others of God's promise of salvation for all who believe in Jesus. To the glory of God and in Jesus' name.

Amen