

Anticipation – 3.16.25

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Williamsburg

May the words that come from our mouths and the thoughts that form in our minds be pleasing before you, O Lord, our solid foundation, and our Savior. Amen.

Does anybody remember the song “Anticipation” by Carly Simon? Most of us know it as the Heinz ketchup commercial jingle. In the commercial, the ketchup was thick, rich, and poured very slowly, and as the person waited for the ketchup to come out of the bottle, we would hear:

***“Anticipation, anticipation,
Is keeping me waiting.”***

That song would certainly be the background music for our Old Testament passage today. Abram was impatient and anxious about what would happen next.

Abram has left his home to travel to a land that God would show him. He is leaving a secure “present” for an uncertain “future.”

For you see, God had made Abram a promise.

In fact, God had made Abram a couple of promises, which included children and land. And Abram had yet to see any of those promises come to pass.

And so, our scripture opens with a spirited dialogue between God and Abram.

One of our basic needs as humans is safety and security and the first thing God immediately does is to calm Abram’s fear by assuring him of God’s presence and protection.

God reminds Abram of the promise, that God would make of Abram a great nation beginning with Abram’s son, and the promise of a homeland.

But instead of feeling less afraid, and comforted, instead of feeling confident in God’s words, Abram is still skeptical and begins to question God’s timing.

So, Abram shares with God some observations:

Observation #1. Sari's biological clock has stopped ticking.

Observation #2. We have not settled in any specific place, and

Observation #3. Why me anyway?

If I were to characterize Abram's trust in God as a kitchen appliance, I would have to say, Abram had microwave faith. "I must see the results now. You promised me God; I want to see them now."

We humans do not "wait" very well. We do not like to stay in just one place or position until a particular time or until something happens. We just do not do "waiting" well.

But Abram had to learn, and so do we, that God does not operate on a chronological time system. God does not have a big digital clock in the sky, or a Google calendar that defines and confines God's every move.

God operates on Kairos time, God's right, and opportune moment for a matter to be accomplished.

But we cannot be too hard on Abram. We say we trust in God to come through for us.

But do we find ourselves not unlike a modern-day version of Abram, needing constant reassurance and even proof at times, to believe that God is true to God's word.

Abram, the great patriarch, the model of faith throughout biblical history, Abram is not buying this right now. It just did not make sense to him. In his mind there are certain physical and natural things that must happen for God's promises to come to pass.

Abram is a typical human being, who believes, but has doubts, and sometimes needs a sign. Abram needed a visual reminder of God's promises. So, God used his creation to prove God's commitment to Abram. God shows Abram the night sky filled with stars.

“Can you count the stars,” God asks Abram. “That is how large your family will be. Not only will I give you a son, but I will give you a multitude of descendant's, a great nation, generation upon generation, upon generation.”

Observation#1. Abram's good to go.

But wait, the story gets interesting. The scriptures say that Abram believed God and trusted in God's promises.

And then with his very next breath, Abram is back in line at the complaint counter of anxiety and worry.

Now when it came to the land, Abram wanted to know the logistics of how God will make the land belong to him.

In this request, I do not sense a frustration on God's part, just a gentle reminder, "You can trust me Abram, my word is my bond. If I say I will do something you can count on it." And God seals the deal, with an act of covenant, a commitment binding God's self to God's own word.

For Abram, it was the sign of the smoking firepot and a flaming torch passing between the halves of the animal carcasses.

Observation #2. Abram's good to go.

So, why Abram? Why not, Abram? God chose Abram to be a participant in God's plan of divine generosity; to give Abram what he did not have, children born of Sari, and property to call his very own.

The fulfillment of God's promises does not depend on us. It does not matter who we are, or what abilities we may or may not have. It all rests with God.

Observation #3. Abram's good to go.

Just like Abram, we may not understand the "how" of God's working in our lives. We may have questions, doubts, and fears along the way. Our prior experience with God helps to build our faith.

And we may struggle with the answers God gives to us. And that is okay. Our response is to take one step at a time, trusting God at God's word. We do believe, and we ask God to help our unbelief.

And to remember, that as with Abram, God has sealed the deal with us; an everlasting relationship, an act of covenant, a commitment binding God's self to God's Living Word, Jesus, because of God's love for us.

In our Lenten journey of preparation toward the cross, even amid our anxiety and our impatience, we are encouraged to “persist” in our faith; but to realize that we are subject to God’s timetable and our challenge is to trust in the Lord, to take heart and to be strong.

Amen, Amen.