

Sunday February 28, 2021 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church

**Bible Study – Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
“Walk Before Me”**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes) In pairs or groups of three, have participants tell, if they know, the origins of their names (or they may share the origins of family members' names if they don't know their own).

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 Context. This week's reading is a culmination of a series of promises of land and offspring that God makes to Abram. Like the covenant God had made with Noah, God takes the initiative and makes the covenant “everlasting,” at least from God's side. In this telling of the story we learn that the relationship of Abram and Sarai with their God transforms them: Abram becomes Abraham, Sarai becomes Sarah. Not only does God promise offspring, but also that they will be the ancestors of nations and kings. God's promise is all the more unbelievable since both Abraham and Sarah are well beyond their child-bearing years and have never had any children together. In the verses passed over in this week's reading (vv. 8-14), God instructs Abraham to circumcise all the males of his entire household as a sign/reminder of this covenant, including himself.

Read Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn't make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- How comfortable are you with the label *Christian? Baptized believer? Disciple?* Which do you identify with the most? Why?
- What has Abram/Abraham had to sacrifice to be a faithful follower of God? Why is sacrifice a vital component of discipleship?
- Reread verse 1. Notice that, first, God reminds Abram of God's nature. Second, God gives the condition of the covenant, “Walk before me, and be blameless.” What might it look like to walk before God and be blameless? [Note that Noah was also referred to as blameless in Genesis 6:9. Note also that God has given Abram few specifics. Instead of a specific location, Abram is told to go to the place God will show him. Instead of telling Abram exactly how, God tells the childless and old Abram that his descendants will be exceedingly numerous.]

- How can our Lenten practices of giving up (“rending our hearts”) be small ways that we learn to trust God more?
- In this passage, God also includes Abram’s wife Sarai/Sarah as an important part of the story. Her name, and hence her destiny, is radically altered by God. The story of Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah takes place across decades. Like them, we too can feel that God is working at a glacially slow speed. What does their example teach us about dependence on God? About a life of faithfulness?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

Covenant-keeping God, we continue to believe that you are at work in the world. Help us to rend our hearts and give us the eyes to see hope when we are tempted to despair. Give us reassurance of your presence, even during times when we feel we are stumbling in the dark. May our lives be a witness to those around us of your faithfulness. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.