

Sunday, June 11, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
“Trusting the Unknown”
Genesis 12:1-9 and Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, invite participants to respond, “When you hear the word ‘call,’ what image comes to mind?” (i.e., Getting a phone call? Call to ministry?)

Genesis 12:1-9. Context. The story of the Bible is the story of the relationship between God and God’s people. The story really takes off when God liberates the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt. But just as the United States has a “pre-history” leading up to the Revolution, so the book of Genesis tells the “pre-history” of the people of Israel before the Exodus. A central figure in that prehistory is Abram. Born in Ur in Mesopotamia (located in modern day Iraq, 70 miles south of Bagdad), Abram travelled with his father, his wife and his extended family, heading for the land of Canaan. They stopped for some time in Haran (in SW Turkey). It was there that God spoke to Abram, making him the promise of this week’s reading: Abram would come into a land, he would become a great nation, and he would become a blessing to all the other peoples of the earth.

Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26. Context. This week’s reading is a snapshot of the focus of Jesus’ ministry: he came not for the righteous, not for the healthy, but for sinners, the sick, the dying and the dead. In other words, he came for those who had turned away from God, for those who had lost hope and for those who seemingly stood outside the promises of God. The healing of the woman and the raising of the girl – both of whom were ritually unclean by the standards of the day – demonstrate Jesus’ willingness to go beyond the confines of the ritual law, just as was eating with “tax collectors and sinners.” We tend to get distracted by the “miraculous” dimension of the healings, and by the somewhat imperfect notion that “miracles” are a reward for “faith.” But for Jesus’ original audience, and for us as well, the real point is that God loves us so much that there is no barrier that can prevent God from touching us.

Read Genesis 12:1-9 and Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

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 text?

Read Genesis 12:1-9 and Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26 again -

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

- How old was Abram when he left Haran? (Gen. 12:4] If you are younger than seventy-five, imagine leaving everything behind to follow God’s invitation at the age of seventy-five. If you are seventy-five or older, what do you think would happen if you leave everything behind at this age?

(Story) One of my classmates was seventy-five years old when I was in my seminary. He was a successful businessman, had a nice retirement home and a car, and was living in Hawaii, enjoying his retirement life. God called him one day to go into ministry, so he left everything and followed God at seventy-five.

- What would your reaction to such a call be? What might you do if God calls you to do something that requires you to change the way you live?
- *Jesus said, “follow me.” More often than he said, “believe in me”*). What is the difference? How do you describe “following Jesus” and “believing in Jesus?”
- What was the social status of the woman who touched Jesus' cloak? [She was most likely an outcast or someone seen as ritually unclean since she suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years.]
- How do these scripture passages (the woman’s healing and the raising of the girl) reflect the compassion and mercy of Jesus? What does it say about Jesus that he has authority and also extends compassion and mercy?
- *“The other thing that is important to keep reminding folks is that hearing a call from God is not something reserved for the clergy. **It comes to us all**—to all who want to follow this path; to all who want to become disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It might be a call to a place, to a task, or to a way of living.”* Have you felt a call from God to do certain things? How might we fulfill God’s call to ministry in our everyday relationships?

(Story) Mrs. A has been attending church for a long time; she especially enjoyed the church craft group. After attending [the Walk to Emmaus](#) (a 72-hour spiritual retreat), she discerned what God was calling her to do. She decided to start a quilting ministry since she knew how to quilt. When she saw an article about the [Garden of Innocence](#) (a nonprofit organization that provides dignified burials for abandoned and unidentified children), she felt God had called her to make quilts for those children.

- What are the gifts God has given you? Do you hear God’s call in any areas of your life? This week, let us continue to listen to what God is calling us to do. Remember, we want to follow Jesus, and it does not matter if we are clergy or laypeople. *Jesus uses us all to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!*

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). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

Gracious and Loving God, thank you for calling us. Give us the strength and courage to answer Your call and follow Jesus. Like the characters from today's scriptures, we need your help to trust you fully. Guide us to discern what we are called to do in our community, so you can use each of us as your instrument of love. In Jesus' name, we pray. **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.