

Sermon Notes: August 7, 2022

[Lectionary Readings](#)

Focus: Covenants and Promises: Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus.

During the sermon, I will focus on Abraham as a major recipient of a covenant promise with God. In five promises (Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus), there is a building climax to the Messiah. Noah was the life raft, Abraham was the homesteader, Moses was the community builder, David was the shepherd turned King, and Jesus is the culmination of a new promise built on the others.

1. Noah the first part of Genesis is an uninterrupted downward spiral. Noah enters the scene fully immersed in the spiral. God is fed up with creation. Humanity is deemed so broken that only the hard reset of a flood will do. Noah must build a life raft to preserve a small remnant of humanity to survive this genocidal flood. The rainbow, the promise not to do it again, requires no handshake from Noah. (It is the only “one-sided” promise of the five). But the rainbow did not seem to be effective in the long run.

2. Abraham the flood was supposed to fix things, but the downward spiral continues. God tries again with Abraham. Abraham would be set up with land and family, and the nations would be blessed by God through Abraham. All Abraham needs to do is journey to an unknown destination in faith. Genesis 15 and 17 have two different vibes on the promise made to Abraham. This is where I will spend time in my sermon:

Genesis 15 (portions) After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless...He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness...So the Lord said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.” Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two...When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram.

In fifteen, all nations will be *inspired* by Abram/Abraham, but not directly ruled by Abraham.

Sidenote: Cutting animals in half and walking through them were an ancient version of a serious handshake deal.

Genesis 17 (portions) When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will increase your numbers.” Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations... I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. *Whole lot of details about circumcision excluded*

In seventeen, this development seems more like nations will be *ruled* by Abraham's descendants. I will spend time in my sermon exploring how this relates to today. I want to compare "inspired" and "ruled,"

3. Moses He says, "Let my people go," and after the Hebrews flee Egypt, they arrive at Mount Sinai. As the refugee spokesperson, Moses climbs the mountain where God promises to make them a people governed by God and priests. He gets all glowy talking to God in the clouds, which proves too much for the people to manage

4. David the people thought God our governor is all right, but wouldn't a human king be better? The Israelites had been a confederation of tribes up to that point, but they longed for a central authority. They first get King Saul who was a train wreck. After Saul, David is far better at overcoming Israel's enemies. After multiple wars, David wants a monument to God in the form of a temple. God promises that David's *son* will build the temple. Despite all his sons profoundly *not* keeping promises, God makes a promise to David through his distant relative in Jesus.

5. Jesus Broken promise after broken promise leads to God once again make a promise for a Messiah. But this time it is for keeps. Jesus will be like Noah providing a life raft for his people. Jesus will build a community stronger than Abraham's. Jesus will lead the people more confidently than Moses. Finally, Jesus will be a king for all time and people far better than David at his best.

Back to Abraham Remember the two versions of the promise made to Abraham?

Genesis 15: Abraham's life and work will inspire people as countless as the stars. Abram need not become a warlord king, but he will be light and life for all the countless people after him.

Genesis 17: Abraham focuses his energy on pushing the promise forward by circumcising everyone. He is much more up in their business.

Today I feel like we as a country are trying to figure how to live into God's promises. Politicians and church leaders are leaning hard into a form of *Genesis 17*: God made this country, and it is our duty to keep things in order, and to bring the country back to an imagined Christian inception. If you break eggs along the way to the holy omelet, who really cares? Inspiration is nice, but they will rule regardless.

Another section of the country, of which I include myself, wants to be faithful to God's promises but is deeply allergic to "command and control" in faith or politics. I hope and pray that we do not go down the road of the Christian Authoritarianism that will metaphorically circumcise everyone they feel they have a right to control.

God has blessed us; now how do we carry the promise forward? Involvement with the problems and challenges of our time is a big part of keeping a promise to love the world. Let us pray for king, priest, leader, and lifeguard Jesus to help us keep this promise of love. Hopefully, people as countless as the stars in the future will embrace a who is love. **Todd**