

The Story
God Builds a Nation
Genesis 12 – 35
1/18/15

- For the next few months, we will be going through the story of the Bible as one continuous chronological story. Last week, Pastor Angela looked at creation and Adam and Eve and she also touched on Noah and the flood. Today, we come to the next big part of the story where God builds a nation.
 - o After the flood of the earth, the nations of the world once again began to develop and grow, but people did not remember or honor their Creator. Instead, they had made for themselves all types of gods from wood and stone.
 - o Nations worshipped the sun and moon and the stars, but the living God they did not acknowledge until God call out to Abram whose name would later be changed to Abraham.
 - o Now, ten generations have come and gone since Noah to Abraham and twenty generation since Adam to Abraham.
- Once again, our gracious God reaches out to us as his creation to give us yet another chance. It's another chance to have a relationship with him and another chance to know God intimately.
 - o This time, God is going to build a nation. It is going to be a nation that is different from all others on the face of the earth. God is going to cause a people to be born who are set apart as his own.
 - o To do this, he called Abraham and his wife, Sarah, to leave behind the country they were born in and to wander the desert to a place that God will show them. They traveled with their entire family some 1,400 miles to a new land called Canaan and settled around where present Jerusalem is now located.
 - o Is God calling you to leave behind your old ways, your old familiar places and to follow him to a new and wonderful place and a new and wonderful life?
- In order for God to redeem his people, he had to build a new nation which would be expected to be different from the twenty generations before in which Adam and Noah lived. Despite his great disappointment in humankind, God still tried to reach out to use by taking the initiative to start with Abraham.
 - o Now, Abraham did not have any good influences at all in the country in which he was leaving because of the people's wickedness. Therefore, God came up with a different strategy to call Abraham and asked him to leave his country so that Abraham could start a new nation for him in a totally different country.
 - o He had to remove Abraham from his country and set him apart to begin the new nation.
- Just like Abraham, certain environments in which you grew up cannot help you fulfill God's purpose for your life because they are not a good influence on you.

- God just cannot bless you in certain places. He has to ask you to leave like Abraham so he can bless your life. It's not that God is unable to bless you where you are, but he just wants you to be a blessing to other people because the people in your environment are up to no good. God does not want to waste his blessing.
- When God wants you to change environments and he tells you to leave your comfort zone, just do like Abraham did and obey him and follow him where he leads you. You have to cling to the knowledge that what God wants to accomplish in your life, he just cannot do it in the environment where you are.
- When God wants to give you a fresh start, a new beginning, you sometimes have to separate yourself from all others who are in the way – your own cousins, your own uncles, brothers and sisters – who will tell you bluntly that God will not give you what you have been asking him.
 - You have to separate yourself from the negative people who are telling you that you will never make it. You have to set yourself apart from the crowd if God is going to start something new in your life.
 - God is willing to blessing his people by making them over. He wants to bless our lives like he did for Abraham, but we have to go when he says to go. You have to leave everything behind when he says “Go” so you can allow him to fulfill his purpose for your life.
- For those who are married, if you want God to bless your marriage, when he says leave and cleave, you have to obey him which means you have to set yourself apart for your spouse, forsaking all others to cleave with your spouse.
 - Wait and see if God is not going to bless your marriage because you do what he says. The King James Version says, “Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh.”
 - Unfortunately, a lot of marriages these days are falling apart because husbands and wives are not willing to leave their parents alone and cleave with each other to become one flesh.
 - If we are following God’s advice on marriage, we would have much better marriages, families and societies. But, we just want to do what we want to do regardless of what God says.
- What would have happened when God told Abraham to leave if Abraham did not leave? Would Abraham still be blessed by God? No, I don’t believe so. The only thing that made the covenant between God and Abraham work was trust and obedience – nothing else.
 - This new beginning, this new nation, this fresh start God initiated through Abraham would not be possible with Abraham’s faith and his obedience to God. Like other generations before, Abraham would have disappointed God. Without faith and obedience, Abraham could not please God to the point where God credited it as righteousness.
 - The Bible says in Genesis 15:6 that Abraham believed the Lord and the Lord credited to him as righteousness. Abraham is declared righteous through faith.
- This is the kind of faith we need to have as we study God’s story because it is one thing to study God’s story and another thing to do something because of the story. Therefore, if we don’t trust God’s Word, the story will not serve the purpose of bringing us back to God.

- Faith and obedience are the groundwork of God's blessings. Abraham was a blessed man because of his faith. His faith did not sit still. It took some steps and we must take these steps also by obeying God as we believe his story.
- Friends, the two things we need to make our Christian life enjoyable are to trust and obey. Just as without faith it is impossible to please God, our obedience to God is much better than all sacrifices we can give to him. If we can only trust God and obey in every aspect of our lives, we will be rejoicing all the time and live a victorious and successful Christian life as we receive God's favor.
 - Is it hard to trust God and obey what he say? Do we want to simplify our life? Do what God says like Abraham did!
 - Or, do we want to complicate our life? Then, ignore what God says like Adam and Eve did. Which way do you prefer – the easy one or the hard one? If you want to be a happy Christian, I would encourage you to do what God says to make your life much easier.
 - As the song writer wrote, "When we walk with the Lord, in the light of His Word, what a glory he sheds on our way. While we do his good will he abides with us still and to all who will trust and obey. For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.
 - Abraham trusted God and obeyed him. He left his country to go where God would want him to be and as a result of that, he became the father of faith for all.
- Secondly, the story reveals God's promise to Abraham. After Abraham received God's call, the first promise God made to him was to make Abraham a great nation.
 - How would that be possible for God to make Abraham a great nation with Abraham being 75 years old and his wife, Sarah, 65 years old at the time? Well, the answer is found in Isaiah 55:8 which says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not my ways declared the Lord."
 - God, as the sovereign God, chooses mysterious ways to work out his plan of redemption to bring his people back to him.
- As we can see in The Story book, in order for God to build a nation, he called Abraham in Genesis 12 and begins to form a family through whom he will reveal his purpose of redemption to the world. He revealed his purpose and determination to redeem the human race that he had created from the devastation of sin by the choice of his grace and love.
 - In Genesis 12:1-2, the Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you." At the age of 75, God promised Abraham a son through whom Abraham would become a great nation.
 - God would do what he said even though it seemed very impossible for Abraham and Sarah to give birth to a child at their age. But, faith always stretches us beyond where we are. If we can see every step of the way, it is not really faith, it is sight.
 - When God promises us something, sight tells us it is impossible, but faith tells us all things are possible with God. Just as Abraham, we need to believe on God's promises because he is a faithful God and he will always do what he says and he will always keep his promises.

- Do you believe in God's promises this morning? At that age, it was harder for Sarah to believe as a woman who was childless all her life. Abraham believed, but he was too anxious to see that happen. It was like he was telling God, "Ok God. Let's get to this nation building project and get it underway. You know I'm 75. I am not a spring chicken. Time is wasting away. Sarah is not getting any younger, either."
 - o So what did God do? He waited! He waited to show Abraham and Sarah that their timing was not his timing. How many people here enjoy waiting? Raise your hand if you consider yourself a patient person. Raise your hand if you have the gift of patience.
- Who do you think has more patience – men or women? Sarah was 65 and barren. Ten years pass by. Read Genesis 16:1-4 when Sarah tries to take matters into her own hands. Tell me now, was that God's way to build a nation or Sarah's way?
 - o She encouraged her husband to have a son with her maidservant, Hagar. Do you see here any similarity with what took place in the garden? Yet again, God's chosen people broke God's heart.
 - o As we read the story of Abraham and Sarah, we can conclude that God's ways are not our ways and his timing is not our timing. Therefore, it is not enough to just believe on God's promises, but you also need to have the patience to wait on God's timing.
- Often time, we forfeit God's blessings by rushing ahead of him and not being willing to wait for his will to be done in our lives. A lack of patience can create complications in our lives and in our world.
 - o Ishmael, the son Hagar bore for Abraham became the father of the Arab nation and the foundation of Islam which still creates a lot of problems in our world today. Terrorists are killing people everywhere.
 - o This is what happens when we cannot wait on God's timing. We make quick decisions based on our emotions or feelings which might affect us for the rest of our lives and for future generations to come.
- Our impatience will not make God move faster! God fulfilled his promise to Abraham and Sarah 25 years after Sarah was concerned about being 65 at the time and Abraham was concerned about him being 75 years old. God waited 25 years until Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 probably just to show them that he could do it!
 - o Who can tell God what to do? Can we intimidate God with our impatience and our demands? No, because his ways are not our ways which means God does not operate the same way we do.
 - o If one of us here were to choose two people to build a nation, we would never choose a 65 year old woman and a 75 year old man. Not at all.
 - o Similarly, if we were to choose a woman to be the mother of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we would never choose a fifteen year old to do that. We would think of someone more mature. But, God saw the heart. God's thoughts are not our thoughts because he see things we cannot see.
 - o God works in mysterious ways to accomplish his divine purpose in the lives of his people. We don't always understand or comprehend the way he works things out for our lives, but one thing we know is that God will keep his promise.

- God also promised Abraham to give him a great name. In Genesis 17, God changed Abram's name to Abraham which means "father of many" in Hebrew. God said, to Abram, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram. Your name will be Abraham for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you fruitful, I will make nations of you and kings will come from you."
 - o God changed Abram's name to reinforce his promise to Abraham that he would not only have a son through Sarah, but also that he would be the father of many nations. Abraham then became the father of many nations through Ishmael – Arabic nations; Isaac – Israel and the other sons he had with Keturah who was the woman he married after the death of Sarah.
- Throughout the history of the Israelites, the name of Abraham was always remembered because of the covenant he made with God. His name will forever be great.
 - o A great name is to be remembered forever. A great name is a name that will save great grandchildren. A great name will pave the way for future generations after you. God gave Abraham a great name and left a legacy for his descendent to serve and obey God in everything they do.
- God did not only promise Abraham to bless him, but also to bless even those who bless Abraham and to curse those ones who cursed Abraham. God wanted to make sure that he had Abraham covered because when God starts doing great things in your life, people tend to get jealous of the blessings God gives you.
 - o They don't like you anymore. The suddenly rise against you just because you have been set apart for God.
 - o You are working with some people you thought were you friends, but as soon as you get promoted, they become your worst enemies in the workplace.
 - o Look what happened between the two brother, Cain and Abel because God liked Abel's best offerings better than Cain's leftover offerings. Cain got jealous and killed his own brother!
- Unfortunately, this type of stuff still exists today. People don't want to see you prosper. They don't want to see you grow in anything. They hate you because you are dressed with nice clothes or because you are driving a nice car or because your family isn't falling apart.
 - o But when God blesses you, he also protects you and the blessings. That's why we need to dedicate everything we have to him so we many know that everything belongs to him. That's why a great deal of people when God blesses them with a new house or car or whatever it might be, they call upon their pastor to come and bless and dedicate what God has given them to God.
- When it is time for God to bless you, no one can stop him from doing so because God has been working on that blessing for years and he knows that you have been waiting on him for a long time.
 - o Therefore, when he blesses you, anyone that hates you because of that blessing will have to deal with God.
 - o As God told Abraham, I will bless all who bless you and curse the one who curses you. People can stop talking to you, they can hate you and they can covet what God has given you. But, they don't realize that they are putting curses on themselves

- God places people in your life to bless you so he can bless them in return, but he does not put people in your life to curse you so he can curse them in return. That is not the type of God we are serving. He is the God from whom all blessings flow, not curses.
- Lastly, the story reveals God's commission to Abraham. Abraham was to be God's redemptive instrument to pave the way for the Messiah. Through Abraham's descendants, the Messiah would come to save the world and bring people back to God.
 - Abraham was commissioned by God for that ultimate goal – to bring us back to God, not through the sacrifice of his son, Isaac, but through the sacrifice of God's only son, Jesus who later came to do what Adam, Noah, Abraham and others could not do for God. They could not be completely obedient to him and to doing his will.
- You see, my friends, when you obey God and stay in his will, you don't try to help God accomplish his plans for your life by looking for quick fixes. Quick fixes always cause more damage.
 - Sarah was trying to help God by encouraging Abraham to have the promised son through Hagar, their maidservant. God is God and he certainly doesn't need our help in anything he is doing in our lives. All he wants us to do is to trust and obey.
 - He commissioned Abraham to do things for him that required trust and faith in him.
 - Is God commissioning you to do anything for him this morning? Are you trying to help God out with the plans of your life or the lives of your loved ones? Are you being an instrument of God's hand to help bring his people back to him through his story?
- Abraham was commissioned to be a blessing to all people and not just his people because God wanted Abraham to extend his blessings to other nations as well so God could be made known through Abraham.
 - Just as God called Abraham, God has called each one of us and commissioned us to tell other people about his love and his redemptive story. God called us for a redemptive purpose.
 - He didn't call us merely to pour out his blessings upon us. God called us so that in blessing us, we might bless others around us. Every blessing that comes from the hand of God to us comes with a redemptive purpose for others. We are blessed that we might be a blessing. Are we a blessing to others by any chance?
- If we forget this principle, we do so to our own peril as well as to the detriment of others. Just as with Abraham, God has called each of us to participate and cooperate with him in his continuing work of redemption.
 - Remember, you are a part of God's plan of building nation, but you are not to try to help God out to fulfill his plan because God knows what he is doing way better than we do. He is all-knowing. Let him execute his plan.
 - As his redemptive tools, we are called to respond in a manner to God's purpose that would enable us to be a blessing to call people through sharing God's story with them to help them become a friend of God.
- One last thing we want to look at within the story of God building a new nation is that he also commissioned Abraham to be his ambassador to other nations so that God would not only be the God of Abraham and his direct descendants, but also the God of all who will bow before him to worship him.

- God chooses ordinary people like you and me to be his ambassador to a deprived and sick world. He commissioned broken people to accomplish his purpose and to tell his story.
- Why does God prefer to use imperfect misfits to accomplish his purposes? Why would God choose an old couple to populate an entire nation? Why would God choose a teenagers to be the mother of his son, Jesus, the Savior of the world?
 - God is no respecter of persons. He can use senior citizens, teenagers, young adults and adults to accomplish his purposes. He can use broken, imperfect, hopeless, powerless and helpless people in powerful ways to tell his story.
 - So there is hope for you, seniors. God wants you to know that he is not done with you yet. He has got much work for you to do.
 - Teenagers and young people, God can use you in powerful ways to fulfill his purposes just as he used Mary to bring the Savior into the world. Allow God to use you however he wants to make a difference in your church, in your schools, in your neighborhood and at home. God can bless other young people and even your families through you.
 - Broken people – through faith God can erase all your past mistakes and use you to tell his story because he wants to display his power and glory through your brokenness, your flaws, your shortcomings and all your past mistakes.
- Just remember, friends, Abraham, the father of faith made mistakes and God still used him to tell his story. Go through all the great pillars of faith in the Bible that we will read about in the upcoming weeks and you will see how God still used those people as his ambassadors to tell his story around the world in order that his redemptive purposes could be accomplished.
 - God is still calling people to tell his story and you are one of them. He can use you for that purpose if you allow him.
- Let us be a part of God's plan of redemption by being a blessing to others through sharing both God's story and your story with the others because God's story can become your story when it is shared with others.
 - So, if you feel unqualified to be a part of the story God is writing...if you feel it's too late for me, I'm too old...or I've made too many mistakes...or I've had my chance and I blew it...or I don't have the resources or the gifts...or I don't have the right talents...
 - If you feel this way, you can look at Abraham and Sarah and all the others that will come after them and know that God uses weak, imperfect people like that. He uses people like you and me for his honor and his glory.