

Promised Presence – I don wanna grow up....

2 Lent B Feb. 27/28, 2021 Rev. Dr. David Gardner Tweed

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 ¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” ³Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.” ¹⁵God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

Also, **Mark** 8:31-38 ³¹Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” ³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

When we enter a covenant with God we will be changed. Abram and Sarai become Abraham & Sarah yet they retain the core of who they were. In the gospel, Jesus is beginning to share what his role means and how he will bring about the change that the entry of the Kingdom into the world causes. The power of death itself over humanity will be destroyed and able to be seen for what it is.... a big lie. The entire process of “Growing up” is one of change and coming into one’s full God given identity.

This often includes challenges, difficulties, disappointments....in short, growing pains in order to achieve our full identity. The Promised Presence of God provides encouragement, support and guidance as we continually grow even in and through our death and all those mini-deaths every day.

The name Abram, means “the father is exalted,” and is changed to Abraham, which means “the father of a multitude.” Sarai’s name change also indicates a significant change in the person. For ancient Israelites, the promise of life after death was found in the continuation of the family line in descendants: thus, Abraham and Sarah are promised a son.

*The most ancient **cross** that we have found in Christian art is a small ivory carving on the side of a box from the late fourth century. When execution by crucifixion was commonplace in the Roman Empire, Christians were understandably horrified by the cross, and only after the emperor Constantine outlawed crucifixions could Christians adopt the cross as a symbol of God’s grace.*

*Ancient Israel had no sense of an afterlife. Rather, a successful patrilineal line constituted the continuation of one’s life after death. Thus, the biblical desire for a **son** exemplifies the perennial desire to overcome one’s termination at death. (Yet in a biblical corrective to rigid patriarchy, none of the important sons in the OT, from Seth to Solomon, was a firstborn: thus, often the ideal of primogeniture did not actually determine inheritance.) Calling Jesus, the Son of God arises from within this patrilineal worldview. As Son of God, Christ is our way beyond death. (Thanks in part to SundaysandSeasons.com)*

Some Practical LIFE – (Living In Faith Everyday) insights/practices:

A) *Does your name mean anything? Why did your parents name you what they did? Abraham & Sarah receive new names and a new calling from God. Yet each retains the root of their original name. They are not asked to leave behind their identity & history. Instead, God meets them where they are and leads them into a new way of faithful living. If you could name who you are now as you journey toward God’s envisioned future for you what would your name mean?*

B) How do you learn....visually, auditory, kinesthetic (touch or doing)? What is the last important lesson or review you experienced for your faith? Why do you think you experience them regularly or don't have them? Do you truly want to grow or are you comfortable just as you are? How do you keep focused on "heavenly things?" (These are not about moral purity its about the positive life energy of love, hope, justice and wholeness that God desires all to experience and live with.) What do you need to grow "better" in this way? How are contributing to the world so it learns this?

C) The cross Jesus speaks of does not refer to individual burdens (bad job, crabby in-laws, hurt feelings, illness, grief). The cross Jesus is journeying toward is his own death as the result of living out God's kingdom in the world. Who has died as a result of carrying the cross of Christ? What are some of the real costs of following Jesus in the way of the cross? Think everyday.....what are the true Crosses you might bear for awhile so that others might be relieved of a burden?

Upcoming:

3.7 Promised Presence: Crushing Rules

3.14 Promised Presence: Persevering & Enduring

3.21 Promised Presence: Hope Seeds that Break Hearts

3.28 Promised Presence: From Waving Palm Branches to Hanging on a Tree Branch