

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

"Relation"

Genesis 15:1-21, 17:1-9 (Covenant with Abraham)

Genesis 28:10-16 (Jacob at Bethel)

Genesis 50:15-21 (Joseph and "but God meant it for good")

Pastor Bill's intro:

The second word begins with the story of humanity's sin in the Garden of Eden. That sin was not a voracious appetite for fruit which was a delight to the eye, it was the desire to "be like God," violating the God-designed separation between divinity and humanity. The result was the brokenness of every kind of created relationship that humankind can have. Once "sent" from the Garden, Adam and Eve conceive a family where the first-born murders his brother.

The rest of the book of Genesis tells the story of the human family, recounting ancient memories, stories, and assumptions about how humanity ended up where it did. Beginning in chapter 12, we are introduced to one who would today be described as a Bedouin, a wanderer without a country. His name is Abram, later changed to Abraham.

The central focus of the Biblical story here is covenant. Covenant is often defined as a promise, but I find that a little too weak. A covenant is an agreement where one party binds oneself to another. Sometimes these covenants are one-sided and in other cases there is a reciprocal response. In the Bible, the majority of covenants are accompanied by some sign or action.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- Read the story of God's first covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15:1-21. Take time to imagine how long it would have taken Abraham to cut those animals in two. The point of the covenant is rooted in ancient practice. God, represented by a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch, passes between the cut pieces. It was a way of saying, "May you do this to me if I do not fulfill my covenant with you." What was the covenant?
- Think about what Abraham had to do in order to earn God's covenant promise. What do we call a covenantal gift that we do nothing to receive?
- Read the story of the gift of a son in Genesis 18:1-15. Then read about his birth in Genesis 21:1-7. What consistent sub-theme is present in the story that gives us a clue as to why the name of Isaac is chosen?

- Read Genesis 22:1-19. There is a specific place in the story where we see Abraham's faith. (Hint: it is in verse 5.) Read Hebrews 11:1. Reflect or discuss how these two passages connect.
- Read Genesis 28:10-22. God confirms his choice of the unlikely deceiver/opportunist to carry on the covenant and Jacob awakes to say, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it!" Think about when you have thought you were all alone and desperate and then something happened that let you know that God was there with you all the time. If you are studying with a group, take time to share with each other.
- Write down what the name Israel means. What does your name mean? How did you receive it? Do you like it? Would you change it? If you could have a different name that reflected your faith journey or life experience to this point, what would it be and why?
- Think about how a negative situation in your life has been turned into something positive and good when you were willing to trust God. Reflect and/or share with your group.