

Lent 2, 2010
Good Hope Lutheran Church
Genesis 15

Grace mercy and peace be multiplied among you all in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, AMEN.

When God first appeared to Abraham, God made this man a promise:

“You, Abraham, and your wife Sarah, you will have many descendants, and this land you see will be your home. Just trust me, and believe.” Many descendants, a home in the land, that was the promise God had made; and God made them that promise back in Genesis 12, when Abraham was *only*, 75 years old. Sarah was that old too, and you should know that at that time Abraham and Sarah had no land and they had no children, all they had was this promise from God—You will. You will, you’re childless, homeless, and 75 years old, I know that, but trust me, said God. You will have a son, and you will have a home.

Today’s lesson, Genesis chapter 15. Ten years have passed. Still no land, still no family. And it’s not like Abraham is getting any younger! “Uh, God?” says Abraham. “Hello, remember me? You made this promise, but nothing has happened!” Keep in mind, for us it’s only been a couple chapters since the promise was first made, but for Abraham it’s been ten solid years, what’s going on here? You have given me no offspring! he says

in verse 3. Lord you have given me no children, you have given me no home, you have given me a fat lot of nothing—what happened to your promise?

I remember the promise, God says in verses 4 and 5. I remember, chill out, it'll happen. And in verse 6, very nice, Abraham believed. Abraham trusted God and God was pleased, but. Abraham was also only human. Verse 8. "Lord?" he says. "How do I know. How do I know."

My sermon, two weeks ago, I asked the question of sleepy Lutherans everywhere, What if it's true? This Jesus thing, I mean, what if He really is the Son of God who died on a cross to forgive our sins and then rose from the dead to save us, what if it's all true and you knew it, would you wake up for that? Drowsy as you are, would you wake up if you knew it was true?

Today, we see Abraham, and we are forced to ask exactly the opposite. What if it's not. That is after all exactly what Abraham is saying here, What if it's not true. What if I only *thought* I heard you speaking Lord, what if I only wished it, or dreamt it. What if it wasn't you talking to me at all what if was just my lonely old heart *hoping* for a home and *hoping* for a family, hoping for a God who would come to my rescue, what if I really didn't hear your voice at all? What if I did but you were only kidding. How do I know.

Verse 12. A deep and terrifying darkness descended upon Abraham. And I

think maybe, we can understand why.

It seems to me we live in an age, that is right where Abraham was in Genesis chapter 15. We have heard the story of Jesus, we have heard the promises of God, we have heard and we believe but we also may have our doubts; and our fears. We have many good gifts in this life—so did Abraham by the way—we have many good gifts and by and large are very comfortable, we in this country might complain once in a while but we're almost embarrassed to do so, because we know we have it pretty good. Still. What we really want the most, what our hearts are just aching for. It's what we believe God has promised us. Forgiveness, forgiveness for mistakes we have made in the past, forgiveness for hurtful things we have done. Kindness, and affection, people we love who still love us too, and who will, no matter what. Isn't that what we want most? And hope. Hope for the future, I mean is this it? What we see right here, right now, is this as good as it gets? Or do we dare hope for something better, a place a time when everyone we love will be together again. Whatever has us separated—misunderstandings, mistakes, harsh words, bitter feelings, death itself. Whatever has us separated including death itself, do we dare hope it'll be overcome someday? That we will be together, has God actually promised us this? Or is that just what we want to believe. Has God promised? Or is that

just what sad lonely hearts long for, and what sad lonely people choose to cling to. Has God promised this, really? We know the story, we've heard it and we do believe but like Abraham back then a whole generation today is left to wonder, really? Really, how do I know? And as a result, the deep terrifying darkness that Abraham went through that night, is something our whole world is experiencing. And maybe you too, once in a while.

In verse 18, God spoke to Abraham again, to re-assure him. God spoke to Abraham again, to put an end to that dark terrifying night and lift him from his despair. God spoke and simply repeated His promise, a promise which God then kept!—15 years later, in chapter 19. 15 years later, chapter 19, the promise was finally fulfilled, Isaac was born, but for now, this night, this chapter. All God did, was repeat what Abraham had heard before. To you, to your descendants, I will give this land as a home. I promise.

Someday, in a subsequent chapter in the history of the world, God will keep every one of the promises He has made to us. Christ has died, Christ is Risen, and Christ *will* come again—someday. And when He does, well. All I know to say is that it will be worth the wait. Everything we need, everything our hearts most long for—all this and more is what God will give. But for today? For today, we are not left with nothing, but we don't have everything yet either. We're still, in between, and what we have is what we know and

believe and have for so long—that in the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins, and helps us along the way, and fills our hearts with hope, and lifts our lives from despair, and gives us people to love and be loved by. And who simply says that everything else is on the way. Everything else will be here soon. “I promise.”

May you hear that promise from God, and believe, and may you find all the hope and strength you need; till the day comes at last. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, AMEN.