

072918 Genesis 12:1-9 Abraham Series: "Road Trip"

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College. Spring break. Road trip. It happened decades ago, but I remember it like it was yesterday. Three buddies and I head to Florida from Michigan. Stop in Charlotte, where one of them lives. Spontaneously, we decide to visit the Outer Banks. Arrive in the middle of the night. Pouring rain, wind blowing. Set up the tent in the dunes, in a deserted area. Rain coming down harder and harder. Wind blowing fiercely. Within an hour the tent collapses. Sleeping in the car, completely soaked. Turns out a hurricane is passing by just offshore, and we have no clue of the danger we've been in.

Some road trips turn out better than others, don't they? We read about Abram's road trip in our Bible story. Imagine what his wife, Sarai, thought, when one day, out of the blue, Abram tells her, "Pack up the tent, sweetie, we're going on a road trip." "Where?" Sarai inquires. "Canaan," he responds. "Why Canaan?" "Because God said Canaan," Abram replies.

The Lord had directed him, "Go to the land that I will show you." And God promised that he would make a great nation of Abram's family. The Lord promised he'd take care of Abram, and promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed through Abram.

See, God was making a covenant with Abram. What is a covenant? Our confirmation students know the answer. A covenant is a two-sided agreement. "If you do this, I'll do that." God promised, "If you go to the land I'll show you, Abram, then I'll do these great things for you."

And we'll see in the weeks ahead how God gave Abram a whole series of covenant promises. Time and again, the Lord re-affirmed and expanded his covenant with Abram and his descendants; and we see these two-sided agreements

played out in the pages of the Old Testament. Every single time God kept his side of the agreement; but, over and over, his people struggled with their side, as we do.

Today's story tells us, though, that when God first called for a road trip, Abram went. Abram showed enough faith in God's covenant promise to do what God asked of him. He set off for Canaan, with Sarai, with his nephew Lot, and with all their possessions. It was a journey of faith. Today's reading from Genesis tells us about Abram's journey. And I love all these action words, traveling words: Abram *went*; he *departed*; they *set out*; they *came*; he *passed through*; he *moved*; Abram *journeyed*. Abram's journey continued for many years. But, on every step, it was a journey of faith.

You and I, we're on a journey of faith, too. We live on Planet Earth; but it's not our forever home, is it? We're heading, ultimately, to live in our Father's land, right? The Bible says our real citizenship, as God's children, is in heaven. This whole life on earth is but a journey, in a sense, a big road trip.

But then there are all these little road trips we take in this life. God invites us to walk with him every day in faith, to trust in his promises, to try it his way, in whatever we're doing. Facing tough decisions this week? Temptations surrounding you? Doubt and despair dragging you down? Someone pushing your buttons, making you want to lash out? Our daily lives are full of these challenging little road trips, aren't they? We can go it alone, and stumble along on by ourselves. Or we can walk with God, journeying in faith, like Abram did.

I spoke with a young couple recently. They're trying to raise their children in the faith; but they're facing hard decisions recently about schedule conflicts: church activities vs. sports

activities, and dance class, and cheerleading. Their family's journey of faith is getting bumpy.

A young adult told me not long ago, "All of my friends, every one, are non-believers. None of them affiliated with any church, or any religion." This young adult is a Christian, but his daily journey of faith is a challenge.

I visited an older couple, and they're having a rough journey, too. Their grown children have stopped going to church. Their grandchildren haven't been baptized. Their journey of faith includes some real sadness these days.

And I spent time this week with two different people who are close to the finish of their journeys of faith. They're both battling terminal illnesses. Keeping faith, in the face of suffering and impending separation from loved ones, is really tough.

These road trips we take can be awfully difficult. If only our God would call you and me by name, like he did with Abram. If only God would make a personal covenant with us. "If you walk by faith with me, I will bless you and give you all you need." Wouldn't our road trips be easier then, more rewarding, less scary?

Well, guess what? That's exactly what God has done! God has called you by name, in your Baptism. God has pledged his love, and promised his blessing, to you. And God has sealed those covenant promises through his Son Jesus Christ. In Christ, God made a New Covenant with his people – not just for Abram and his family. God's New Covenant is for every person who puts their faith in Jesus Christ.

Do you trust that Jesus is your Savior? Do you believe Jesus died for your sins? Do you have faith today that God forgives you and loves you for Jesus' sake?

Then God promises you – he covenants with you (*Olivia, on your Baptism day*); he covenants with all of you on this day – “If you walk by faith with me, I will bless you and give you all you need.”

Can you really trust him? Give it a try. Take a step of faith with God this week. Take one of your little road trips with him. Do it his way, for once. Follow God’s directions. Walk, or run, or tiptoe, or swagger along in the way that God wants you to move. Journey in faith! You may have to pick up your Bible to figure it out. You may have to get some counsel from a Christian friend, or hit the floor on your knees in prayer. But journey in faith.

Next week, we’ll continue our road trip with Abram, who eventually became known as Abraham. For today, journey in faith. Tomorrow? Keep the faith. Tuesday? Wednesday? Thursday, Friday, Saturday? Trust these promises of God. Put your faith, like Abram did, in your ever-faithful, covenant God. Amen.