

Let us Pray

Lord, we thank You that we are all different and yet we are all one in You. Help us not to judge but to love as you have loved us. We thank you that your promise is for everyone and that you never



May God's blessing surround you each day.

As we trust in and walk in His way;

May His presence within,

Guard and keep us from sin;

Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.

LOOK
NOW
TOWARD
Heaven
AND COUNT THE
STARS
IF YOU ARE ABLE TO
Number
Them
GENESIS 15 : 5

MINSTER BETHEL
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

23/08/2020

God's Covenant

He took him outside and said,
“Look at the sky and count the stars,
if you are able to count them.”
Then He said to him,
“Your offspring will be that numerous.”

Gen.15:5

We are all God's People

“¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people ”

Titus 2:11

Good morning and welcome to this weeks service.

As we continue our journey through Genesis today we learn how God's covenant to Abram is to all people as his descendants.

Our Hymn this week is He's Got the Whole World in His Hands: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDBJNQiugnM>):

He's got the whole world in his hands
He's got the whole wide world in his hands
He's got the whole wide world in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands

He's got the tiny little baby in his hands
He's got the tiny little baby in his hands
He's got the tiny little baby in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands...

He's got you and me brother in his hands
He's got you and me sister in his hands
He's got you and me brother in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands...

He's got everybody here in his hands
He's got everybody here in his hands
He's got everybody here in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands...

(The words don't quite match the video!)



Our reading/story today is taken from Genesis 15

The LORD's Covenant with Abram

15 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield,^[a]
your very great reward.^[b]”

² But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit^[c] my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” ⁵ He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

⁷ He also said to him, “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”

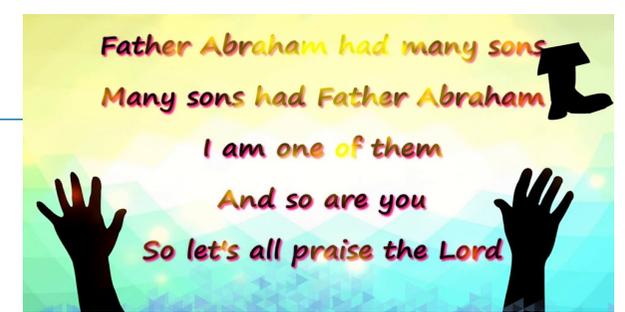
⁸ But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

⁹ So the LORD said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

¹⁰ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. ¹¹ Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to him, “Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi^[d] of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— ¹⁹ The land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”^t



At Minster Bethel the children have always enjoyed singing “Father Abraham” (as an adult I tried to avoid it!). This song teaches that we are sons and daughters of Father Abraham and that everyone around is also a child of Abraham. The lesson today is twofold.

One, that Abram modelled a life of faith for us and that his trust in God even in difficult times still gives an example to us today.

The other lesson is that God created him and that he would be the one to have multiple generations claim him. As God made a covenant with Abram, God promised to be with him and give the land to his descendants. One of my favorite things to do when I am in the country and in an open field is to stare into the night sky and look at the stars. Have you ever tried to count them? You can't do it. You eventually lose track. Those stars also represent all the people on earth. We are all one family, not in the biological sense such as brother or sister, or first or second cousin, but in the sense that all people from all backgrounds around the whole world are children of God.

I think this passage reminds us that God has created all of us to live together. It doesn't mean it will be easy and it doesn't mean we will be the same. When we fight, squabble, or exclude others, we are trying to knock someone to another solar system. Then we miss the point and try to say that God's covenant only includes those that are likeminded to ourselves.

So as you go about in your daily life, think about those people you may disagree with or perhaps have judged away for this or that reason. Sing “Father Abraham” to yourself (or maybe aloud) and listen to the words. Look to the stars to the sky in the evening and imagine who else might be trying to count them too. It's not just your neighbour next door who looks like you or shares your views; it's also the little boy in China, the young mother in Africa, and the older gentleman in Europe. Those people are also children of God and share His covenant. And if you get a chance, look at the stars and remember to always seek God and to be His servants.

Susannah Wesley once told John Wesley, that they are a part of “an endless line of splendor,” to serve Christ and the world.