

Pastor Roy's sermon from August 7, 2016

Abram had a dream, a longing. He wanted his life to matter, and go on and on--never be lost. Isn't that the dream that all of us have?

For Abram having an heir with many descendants was an important part of the fulfillment of that dream. And of all things, that is precisely what he did not have, with little or no hope.

We might expect God in this story, the power and life of the universe, to allow Abram to accept this, and move on with the closure of his life. "Look Abram, nobody gets everything they want." Sometimes it's the things you don't have that you want the most.

But no, God doesn't say that! God moves in and says, "Abram, not Eliezer, but your very own son will be your heir. Hey, Come on outside into the cool of the night. Look up. How many stars are there? Can you even pretend to count them? No, that's right—you can't. So shall it be with your heir, and all your descendants. They will be a lasting blessing and benefit to all.

Was Abram's dream of a son and a land to call home so essential in the workings of the universe and God's ways of life, love, and communion in all of creation? Not likely. But did the creator and source of life honor Abram's dream? Abram's life and accomplishments grow out of his dreams. God honors Abram in their communion together. They speak as friends. They wonder out loud. They test one another--probing, pondering, thinking.

Abram's dreams come to pass because of his regular conversations with God. If you read them all, some of the conversations are terrifying. Some reassuring. Some have laughter. Some are complete with denials. But all are passionate and engaging. Abram finds his way in the present and into the future in conversation. Abram is living a life of prayer—a life of faith. He doesn't always make great decisions. He doesn't often know where he is headed or how his dreams will turn out. But he is never alone. He has faith partners. Sarai, God, his servants.

Abram discovers by prayer and conversation the fulfillment of his yearnings. He does not create his own fulfillment. He is on a pilgrimage in the presence of God by faith.

Faith is not about figuring *God* out. In a strong sense, faith is figuring ourselves out with a divine companion. Faith begins within. Faith grows as we commune like Abram with God. We live into the eternal, into the deepest mysteries of our existence, as we identify our deepest and truest yearnings. Faith is not the stuff of the brothers fear and greed. Faith is God's spark of curiosity placed within us which insists that there must be something more substantial than the pain and sorrow and disappointment bubbling around us. Surely there is more to our lives than the trouble which all too often comes calling.

Might this all be the Kingdom about which Jesus speaks? "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is the father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." In his teaching and healing, is not Jesus inviting us to this city of God, this better country, this place of faithful living?

Jesus says, "Sell what possesses you. Give to those who ask. Make stockpiles of the stuff which no one, nowhere can ever take away. Not ever. What is this and how is this possible? And how do we know what possesses us? How can we give what possesses us away? What will be left if we give away what we've mistakenly come to know as ourselves? These are questions we must ask ourselves in the quiet of the night, looking up into the stars, or looking into the palm of our hand, or the leaves of the trees. The true answers come only from exquisite listening. Listening for the deepest yearnings of the universe, echoed in our own hearts.

If we listen carefully to the call of this kingdom, we will never be disappointed with the freedom we find.

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. As we mindfully live our lives, good treasure will stack up according to the desires of our hearts, according to the yearnings of all of life in communion with God. This is the stuff of grace and mercy. We are wise and blessed if we are possessed by such things.

So, may we daily long for lasting treasure. We preachers often try to tell you what good treasure is, but that discovery may only be made by you. From time to time we will gather the wrong treasure; yes, we shall fail. We will invest in things that rot and disappoint. But the joy of the kingdom is that it is always available in this moment, and only, in this moment. We are not what we have thought, said, or done in the past or might in the future. We have freedom in this moment to choose life, good treasure, now. To live the pilgrimage with Abram, and Jesus, and one another. We all have some listening work to do. To discover the Kingdom within and right next door.

Thanks be to God.