

Bristol Lutheran
Pentecost 18
Genesis 15:1-6
9-18-2016

Creation is probably the best way that I relate to God. Watching sunrises/sunsets. Hiking in the mountains. Sitting by the still lake with a cup of coffee. Looking out at the stars. When I doubt God, when I need reminder of God's goodness and promise, I seek out a moment of quietness, and just breathe and pause.

Often – this happens on Sunday night – as I take the garbage to the curb. Seriously. It is a brief moment, but usually calm and peaceful. And the stars are often out.

What about you?

Do you doubt God?

Do you question God's promises? Is God breaking the promise?

What do you do to be reminded of God?

Broken promise and broken covenant was Abram's feeling.

I'll set this up.

The things that Genesis says are happening, take place after the story of

- The tower of Babel – and God scattered the nations – giving them different languages, because they built a tower to worship themselves.
- And before the city of Sodom and Gomorrah is destroyed...

The story we hear is after God calls Abram. He and Sarai have left home, family, and land in response to God's outrageous call and promise. Abram has come to a new, unfamiliar land and now, it appears, his lineage will die there with him, because he has no kids. God's promises have not held true.

Children in the ancient world were the means by which one's name lived on. The idea of resurrection had not yet been developed, the only kind of life after death that was possible was that one's name lived on in one's children and their descendants. Children were your legacy. They took care of you, it is how you had life in old age, how you defined yourself, how your family practices continued, including the God you worshiped.

So, Abram at this point is "as good as dead" – besides the fact he is like 90 years old.

And God says, Don't be afraid Abram. How would you respond? Sorry, God, love you and all, but I'm about to die.

But God fulfilled the promise.

Do know who the children/descendent of Abraham are?

Us –yes Christians, And the Jews. And Muslims.

Three world religions – all descendants of Abraham – all worship the same God. Yahweh, Allah, God – not just other names for God – the same exact God. Through Ishmael and Isaac. In fact, when Jesus returns, it would fulfill the promise in all 3 religions.

First coming for Jews, second coming for Christians, and Muslims proclaim that Jesus is the one to come back to judge the living and the dead.

Even Palestine Orthodox Christians – who speak Arabic – call God Allah, and schools madrasa. The lines between religions are blurred more than we realize. Jews and Muslims are our brothers and sisters. More numerous than the stars. Because from these very stones, God can raise up all kinds of children. And does.

As faithful people, we recognize that God can and does work in ways that we don't understand, through people and religions, that we think are our enemy.

How does that make you feel?

Maybe that makes you disappointed, because you want God to work in your timeline, to your standards, and your beliefs. But God is not contained by our box.

Abram thought that God had disappointed him.

God's promises look empty in the face of barrenness and hopelessness.

But God surpassed his expectations. God always does.

The God who created the heavens and scattered the stars in radiance across the sky is the same God who promises life for us his children. We recognize and proclaim that in baptism.

In those promises to work for justice, peace, and love of God's creation – to proclaim God in words and deeds – as Easton and his family have done – God is there to show us the way. And when we break our promise, when we refuse to follow, even if we doubt and sin and fall short, when we ignore God's goodness, God still loves us as the creations we are. God surpasses our expectations, and delivers our hope.

Like Abram, our trust in God grows, each time God delivers on those promises. We don't put our legacy into status of children, or our ego, or prestigious jobs, or power, or country, or any leaders that will likely leave us disappointed.

We trust in God who does not disappoint. Who fulfills the covenant to love us, always.

Tonight, go out look up into the sky and count the stars. Recognize that our family, the children of God's creation are more than we count. All have been given the promise of life.