

Sunday, August 7, 2022 – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Gospel: Luke 12:32-40

32 - Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

What are you most afraid of?

What helps calm, lessen, or alleviate your fears?

Do you believe that God wants to give you only the best?

If so, what situation in your life are you therefore better able to handle?

Luke 11: 11-12 (part of the Gospel reading for July 24) –

Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish?

Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion?

First Reading: Genesis 15:1-6

1-4 - The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir."

When have you been facing a situation which – from a human point of view – appeared to be hopeless and/or a dead end?

What kind of action have you taken because the situation looked hopeless?

What is your equivalent of adopting Eliezer of Damascus?

5 - He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

Have the images sent back by the James Webb telescope expanded your concept of the promises of God?

When have you been staring at a human-made ceiling that kept you from seeing the promises of God?

When have you put an eight-foot-high ceiling on what God can do?

What eight-foot-high ceiling are you staring at right now?

When our surroundings are the darkest, the stars and God's promises shine the brightest

A. W. Toser – A "low view" of God reduces God to the size of our biggest problem, our greatest fear, and/or our worst sin

Do you have a low view or a high view of God?

"Our biggest problem is when we do not think that God is bigger than our biggest problem"

What is your biggest problem or your greatest fear right now?

Do you believe that God is bigger than that?

How does Abraham's faith encourage you when you face the seemingly impossible?

Ephesians 3: 20 – "Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine"

Challenge for this week –

Write out some areas in your life where you have a low view of God

Commit at least one of those areas to God and ask Him to help change you

6 - And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Abraham did not know much – he had no knowledge of Jesus – but he believed God’s promise, and God reckoned it to him as righteousness

Philippians 3: 9 – “Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith”

Second Reading: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

1 - Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

8 - By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.

When have you set out, not knowing where you were going?

What was it like? What made you able to do that?

9-10 - By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

When did you do the equivalent of living in tents and staying for a time in a land that had been promised, as in a foreign land?

What was it like? What made you able to do that?

11-12 - By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”

When have you faced a situation that from a human point of view seemed impossible?

In that situation did you consider God faithful who had promised?

If so, what made you able to do that?

Which of these three acts of faith on the part of Abraham – setting out even when he did not know where he was going, living in tents in a land that had been promised, and believing that God would be faithful to His promises – do you most identify with?

13-16 - All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

Do you think more about what you have left behind or where you are going?

How does the faith of the great heroes in the Bible inspire you?

Is there one person in the Bible whose faith is especially inspiring for you?