

## The Gifts of Lent: Call The Call or the Wall

Genesis 12:1-8

Do you have a call? The answer is yes. Do you know what that call is? That may be the more problematic question.

Today's reading from Genesis is a foundational theological story for both Judaism and Christianity. It might have sounded familiar to many of us because this was the scripture we used for our "Blessed and Blessing Others" campaign a couple of years ago. You may have noticed that one of the first effects of receiving a call is to leave. It is a sobering experience to sense a call from God that says leave. I have received that call several times over my years as a pastor. It never comes without a great deal of prayer and thoughtfulness. **No, I'm not telling you I'm leaving, so don't even go there. Whenever we receive the call of God, something will be left behind.** Simply know that. Your sense of loss in the midst of your experience of call is not unique. It is something all of us go through who heed the call of God to go. Sometimes the thing that is left behind is not necessarily a location. It can be an attitude. It can be an assumption. It can be a faulty belief. It can be a grudge. It can be fear. Often the thing left behind is what is holding us back from living to our potential. **Leave it.**

Abram and Sarai's story of call has been relived time and time again throughout history. Later in the story their names get changed to Abraham and Sarah but for now they are Abram and Sarai. They say yes to their call. They trust that whatever God is calling them to do, God will sustain them with grace to accomplish. **It is a stunning faith assertion.** They had no idea where they were going, what they would find there or what obstacles they would encounter. **Does that feel vaguely familiar to anyone?** Since we know the "rest of the story" for Abram and Sarai we know that the obstacles they face are formidable. But the decision to trust God through the process allowed them to become a blessing to their world. That blessing was passed on for generation after generation.

Here's the call Abram and Sarai had: Go to a new land, create a great nation and you will accomplish great things. Here's what they had to work with: They were in their 70's when they received this call, had no children (through whom this great nation would supposedly come) and everything they owned they could carry with them. **There was not a lot there.**

Out of those bits and pieces God was able to create something that would change the world, not only for Abram and Sarai but for all of us as well. **That's the amazing thing about responding to a call. You never know whose life will be changed because you are faithful. You may never know the impact your decision to trust God will have on others.** Abram and Sarai simply go – use the resources they have, trust that God is guiding them and let go of everything else.

**All God's Children, we are called to nothing less.** Do you hear the call of God upon your life? Do you sense the call of God leading us as a congregation? Do you worry that we don't have all the answers to where we are going? So did Abram and Sarai – and they still step out. Are you concerned that we don't have all the resources we need to get there? So did Abram and Sarai – and they still head out. It is the power of the call.

This week most of watched with rapt amazement as the Fukushima 50 continue to battle the explosions and fires at the nuclear reactors in Japan. These workers are true heroes that may save not only the people of Japan but countless others. That effort would not be possible unless those workers felt a call to service – even risking their own personal safety for the greater good.

Whenever we hold up examples of what it means to live by faith, Abram and Sarai are always at the top of the list. Throughout the Bible, they are mentioned as people who exemplify how to faithfully live out one's call. Responding to their call meant **that they had to give up the idol of certainty. So do we.**

The first step is to take a first step. Move. Move your feet. Move your energy. Move your compassion. Do something. Like Abram and Sarai,

you'll soon discover that you are blessed. Those meager things they had were enough not only to sustain them but they built the foundation of their lives upon them. What you have in your life is enough to follow the call of God. You are blessed. Use it to be a blessing to others. You've heard this before. We've talked about this in this place many times. It is the foundational theology of Abram and Sarai. **Go, know blessing and bless others.** How you do it will look differently than how I do it. But when we all do it together, the world is changed forever.

And when you get tired – when you get frustrated, when you are irritated by personality conflicts and budget constraints and events beyond your control, **when you hit the wall – remember your call.** **Remember why** your passion burns hot for what you do. **Remember why** you started out in the first place. **Remember the lives** that have been changed because you made the effort. **Remember the ways** you are different because you cared. **Remember how** doing this together multiplies the effect of any one of us. The only way to avoid the wall is to remember the call.

Sources:

[www.homileticsonline.com](http://www.homileticsonline.com) Recall the Call, March 2011.