

**Thursday, April 2nd, 2020**  
**Thursday in the Fifth Week of Lent**

**Collect for the Day**

O God, you have called us to be your children, and have promised that those who suffer with Christ will be heirs with him of your glory: Arm us with such trust in him that we may ask no rest from his demands and have no fear in his service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Readings for the Day**

**Genesis 17:1-8**

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty;\* walk before me, and be blameless. <sup>2</sup>And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' <sup>3</sup>Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, <sup>4</sup>'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup>No longer shall your name be Abram,\* but your name shall be Abraham;\* for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup>I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup>I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring\* after you. <sup>8</sup>And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.'

**Psalms 105:4-11**

- 4 Search for the Lord and his strength; \*  
continually seek his face.
- 5 Remember the marvels he has done, \*  
his wonders and the judgments of his mouth,
- 6 O offspring of Abraham his servant, \*  
O children of Jacob his chosen.
- 7 He is the Lord our God; \*  
his judgments prevail in all the world.
- 8 He has always been mindful of his covenant, \*  
the promise he made for a thousand generations:
- 9 The covenant he made with Abraham, \*  
the oath that he swore to Isaac,

10 Which he established as a statute for Jacob, \*  
an everlasting covenant for Israel,

11 Saying, "To you will I give the land of Canaan \*  
to be your allotted inheritance."

### **John 8:51-59**

<sup>51</sup>Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.' <sup>52</sup>The Jews said to him, 'Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets; yet you say, "Whoever keeps my word will never taste death." <sup>53</sup>Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets also died. Who do you claim to be?' <sup>54</sup>Jesus answered, 'If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, "He is our God", <sup>55</sup>though you do not know him. But I know him; if I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word. <sup>56</sup>Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad.' <sup>57</sup>Then the Jews said to him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?\*' <sup>58</sup>Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.' <sup>59</sup>So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

### **Reflection**

Who are your ancestors in faith? They may be friends or family, people you grew up going to church with, teachers in church school - maybe even clergy. What they have in common is that you came to understand your own faith through their faith. They helped in the work of passing on the stories and traditions that helped you understand and follow God better. Sometimes our ancestors in faith are even people we did not know ourselves, but their stories continue to shape how we think about our faith. I think about my own great-grandfather, who I was named for. Although I do not remember him, my grandmother's stories about him and how he lived out his faith in God in everything he did are stories that I hold on to. They give roots to my faith.

That's the kind of ancestry this reading from Genesis is talking about when it says that Abraham shall be the ancestor of many nations. It isn't just a promise about Abraham's biological descendants, but a promise about the way his trust in God continues to give us something to hold on to and claim, even now. Although we may not be Abraham's biological descendants, we also can point to him as an ancestor in faith.

His example, of stepping out into the unknown, of leaving everything he knew behind because God had called him to go somewhere else, is particularly inspiring to me right now. Abraham faced an unknown future for most of his journey of faith. He had God's promise about his offspring to hold on to, but he did not know how that was going to be possible, or where God was going to call him next. We also are dealing with the challenge of an uncertain future right

now. We have lots of questions about what is going to happen in the coming weeks and months, and how to faithfully follow God through whatever happens. Abraham can be an example for us, of trust in God, in his willingness to be honest with God, and in his assurance that God would continue to be with him, that with God there is always a future, and that we follow a God whose promises to us will be kept.

~The Rev. Martin Geiger