

Sermon 2007 Pentecost 11 – Proper 14  
Text: Genesis 15:1-6  
Theme: "You Ask Too Small!"

One of the chief differences I notice between people of the Old Testament and people today is that people today treat God as something outside of their lives and people of the Old Testament treated God as their constant companion. The people of the Old Testament sinned just like we do. They killed people, lied, had all kinds of inappropriate liaisons, and boldly stole from each other, but in all of that, they treated God as though he were right there with them, the hub of their wheel.

Today, it seems as though most Christians think of God as someone who handles the big cosmic crises, and the end of the world, but doesn't much care what's going on in our individual lives. We forget how our forefathers walked and talked with God on a moment by moment basis and how they were completely unafraid to ask him for anything – knowing that he would do what was best for them.

Abraham was called Abram at this point in his life which is pretty ironic. Abram, in Hebrew, means *exalted father*. Abram had no children so being named *exalted Father* just constantly

reminded him that he had no heirs and that when he died, so did his name and his line. Sometimes, God makes us wait for the blessing. Sometimes, that is the way he helps our faith to grow.

I planted tomatoes one spring in Seattle, but, to save money, I decided to plant from seed. That's how we had always done it when we were living in Arizona and Alabama. Well, of course you gardeners know that seeds don't sprout so fast and plants don't grow so fast when it is 60 degrees outside and in Seattle, it is rare to get a day over 60 before July. So my tomatoes didn't even sprout until late June and by early September they were blooming! Finally by mid October I almost had my first ripe tomato! Then there was a freeze and the plants all died. You cannot hurry a tomato plant. Likewise, you cannot hurry faith, but you can, like a tomato plant, create the environment where it will grow faster.

I learned after that spring that, in Seattle, if you want to start tomatoes from seeds you have to use a heated green house. And you don't put the plants outside until mid-June or later. Then, after the wet month of June and the warmer month of July,

you get tomatoes by August! Likewise God creates greenhouses for our faith and Abram was in one. He had been promised blessings from God and he was not afraid to remind God of that over and over again and as he did...as he walked and talked with God...as he asked and heard the promise over and over again...his faith grew.

Look at what he says to God. "What will you give me?" Abram felt that all the blessings were meaningless unless he had a child to love and to teach and to pass things on to. "What will you give me?" It sounds almost arrogant, or demanding, or impudent. How dare Abram so boldly ask God for something. But God loves it!

God loves it when we ask...and not just for the little stuff..get me safely home, or heal me from this affliction but for the huge things...make me a great nation to praise your holy name! Make me an instrument that will change the world. Make me a mouthpiece for you Gospel that whole community can hear! We ask too small! We think too narrowly! We worry and fret over a thousand dollars here and a thousand dollars there and fail

to ASK God to bless HIS MINISTRY HERE. It is *HIS* ministry...not ours. He is the one that blesses it and guides it. We are only cogs in the wheel. The problem comes when a cog starts thinking that he is the hub. That pulls the whole wheel off balance and pretty soon...disaster.

Look at Abram. God says, "I will bless you." Abram says, "Then bless me with an heir! Give me something here Lord. Throw me a bone. I've followed you from Ur to Haran and into Canaan. Help me out here!" And the Lord answered him, "Look at the stars Abram." By the way, in the nighttime skies in that part of the country, there are about 9,000 visible stars. "And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness." 9,000 heirs? How's that for a blessing? Is 9,000 enough for you Abram whose name will be changed to Abraham which means "father of many nations?"

Of course Abraham had to wait because that is how faith grows. He was about 75 when he told the Lord to give him

something. About 25 years later, when he was almost 100, Isaac was born and he died 75 years after that. He saw the partial fulfillment of God's promise while on earth, but when God took him out into the night when he was 75, he never could have guessed that well over a million of his people would one day come out of Egypt and back into the Promised Land. Even father Abraham asked too small.

In my newsletter article for September, you will hear me reiterate this point. I'm tired of piddling around here with nickels and dimes. We are too powerful a congregation of God's people to be stuck where we are. It is time to start asking and asking BIG. And God will always answer. Maybe it will be now and maybe it will be 400 years from now but God took our grandparents and parents out under the stars back in 1913 and said, look at the stars Trinity. Your blessings shall outnumber the stars. Well, we've had a lot of blessings here but they haven't outnumbered the stars and we got a second wind a few years ago and now we are picking up steam. Start asking Trinity! Ask big. Ask God to bless us with all the tools we need to do all the work

that is laying right here before us. This is not about collecting money to pay the gas bill – too small! This is not about finding volunteers to host coffee hour – TOO SMALL! This not about serving myself and keeping myself comfortable – TOO TOO SMALL! This about reaching out into our community and seeking all of God’s children and creatively finding ways to help every one of them to grow in Christ. This is about pouring ourselves and everything he has given us into serving our God to accomplish his work. It is a daunting task – but hey – we’re just cogs in the wheel. Ask the hub for everything we need to roll. ASK. AMEN.