

Sermon 2008 Lent 2

Text: Genesis 12:1-9

Theme: "You Say Goodbye and I Say Hello"

We all face goodbyes in life. The one thing that is for certain is that nothing is for certain. There is no forever in this life so we know from the start that everything must come to an end and that eventually we will have to say goodbye. We can face goodbyes well or poorly and how we face them depends largely on our relationship with God.

Our problem with goodbyes is often that we forget that we are nomads. Everyone is so impressed with Abraham picking up and moving from Ur to Haran and from Haran to Canaan. Abraham was good at goodbyes, and no doubt it took some trust in God to do what he did – but remember, Abraham was a nomad! Moving is what he did. And I don't think it was by chance that God chose a nomad to become the Father of Israel through whom Jesus would be delivered.



Did you ever see the comedian, George Carlin, talk about “stuff?” He talks about how we all have to have houses and their primary reason is to have a place to store our stuff. Then we acquire so much stuff that we have to rent a storage place to store the extra stuff we don’t need, but God forbid that we should ever get rid of any of our stuff. Abraham did not have that problem. He could pick up and go because that is what nomads do. They are unencumbered by stuff. For the nomad, possessions are not the priority.

Having lived a very nomadic life myself, I think I understand Abraham. Some of you know that at 44 years old, I am on the verge of breaking a record. If we stay in our current home another couple of years, I will have lived at 43 S. Craig Pl. longer than any other place in my life. My record is 4½ years in one home. I have lived in 27 different houses, 14 different cities and 7 different states. Roots are things that are not familiar to me and one of the advantages of living nomadically is that one learns early not to get too attached to stuff, not to allow stuff to become



an idol. Another thing I have learned is that every goodbye is also a hello.

Our God is not a God of stagnation. He is a God of growth and change and if you want everything to stay the same, I think you are going to have trouble with God. The season of Lent helps us to remember that our whole life is a journey and that just as our Lord lived his whole life heading for the cross, so we spend our whole lives following after that cross that he carries ahead of us. And if you look up and Jesus isn't out there trudging ahead of you...I have a news flash for you. You're on the wrong path.

Now thankfully God is not necessarily calling us to load up our entire household on camels and head for Canaan. Having moved 27 times though, that does not especially worry me. Well, maybe the camel part – I'm not well versed with camels but the moving part is only mildly irritating to me. But God does call us to move in other ways that are no less scary. Look at Nicodemus in the Gospel today.



Nicodemus was not a wet behind the ears Jewish kid looking into the weird rabbi who got Baptized by John. Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin – the ruling party of the Jews. He went to see Jesus at night because he didn't want any of his colleagues to know that he was even speaking to this weird rabbi. And surely Nicodemus felt just like that rich young ruler. Why did he ask? Why didn't he just move along in blissful ignorance instead of initiating a relationship with that crazy rabbi?

Just like Abraham, Nicodemus was called out onto a journey. But his journey is much more like ours than Abrahams. So here you are in Lent. Are you nice and comfortable? Have you become satisfied with your faith? I think that most of us become too easily satisfied. We tend to be like the guy down in Sun City who buys a Porsche and only drives it around the neighborhood. What is the point of having a high performance sports car if you're only taking it to the grocery store?

Lent is a time that the Church set aside a long time ago. It is in fact one of the oldest parts of the Church Year because the



Church used these 40 days before the celebration of the Resurrection to invite people to pack up and travel a new road, a road behind Jesus. They were called catechumens and they wore sackcloth and dumped ashes on their heads to mark themselves as ones who are giving up the old paths, the old ways, the old, worn ruts and they are trying something new, something a little frightening but something that offers promise that nothing did before.

Go ahead. Pack up that little bit that is important and throw out the stuff you don't need. Then follow Jesus. It is a long and dusty road and it will mean saying some goodbyes, sometimes goodbyes to people who do not choose to go this path and certainly some goodbyes to old ways and old choices, old ruts. But it will mean saying hello to a whole new life with Jesus, hello to life of peace and joy and the sure and certain truth that you are walking with Christ, the Lord of the universe and he has many things to show you. AMEN.

