

“I Give Up...Expectations”
Genesis 12:1-4
March 12, 2016 2nd Sunday of Lent
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We are people of expectations. And certain expectations are good. We expect our children to behave or act a certain way. We expect certain things at our job. We expect our church to Gather, Grow, and Go.

However we expect certain things, I’m afraid because we have become use to them. We in the United States and in this area are----excuse me---are spoiled. In fact there is a sense of entitlement. It is more than an “I expect” it, but an “I deserve it” attitude.

I think we might have Expectation and reality confused. Let me show you in a humorous way how reality and expectation may differ. **(Images of expectation/reality)**

In the season of Lent we are engaged in this sermon series: “I Give Up.” Last week... “I Give Up...Control.” This week: “I Give Up...Expectations.” Now we may be wondering if it is wrong to have expectations. I think all of us have certain expectations. Humanly and even selfishly I can get preoccupied with expectations. Expectations I have from the world, expectations I have of others and even expectations I have of myself. However, from a spiritual point of view our expectations then the reality of the world may be two different things. **(image)**

Our life is not always smooth sailing. It may look more like the scibbly-scrabbly side as opposed to the straight line.

In Genesis 12 we have the story of Abraham. Actually at this point his name is Abram. We find the story of God changing his name to Abraham in Genesis chapter 17.

Abram very clearly gives up his own expectations. **Verse 1: Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.**

Abram was to leave his country, leave his family (his kin folk), leave his father’s house and go to a new land. Which land? Where is the land? How much traveling do I have to do to get to this land? God in essence says, “I won’t tell you I’ll just show you...follow me.”

Last year I got Sarah a surprise for her birthday. It was much different than the surprise I got her this year of her taking me to the Emergency Room. Last year I said, “Let’s go in the car and I’m going to take you somewhere.” I told her I was not going to tell her where.

With my directionally challenged problems, I am sure she was a little concerned. She keep saying, “I don’t know where we are going.” And then she would try to guess. She couldn’t figure it out.

Part for me was watching her expectant face and her eyes...the thrill of the journey. We finally got closer to our destination....and she exclaimed.... “Are we going to Bush Gardens?!” I had taken a route that was a very back way. She was thrilled then and throughout the year as I got season passes.

Now on that journey Sarah had to take some risks. #1. She was driving with me. #2. She knew I was directionally challenged and I was using a GPS. #3. There was a risk that once we were at the destination she would say, “This is where you are taking me?”

Sometimes in our life...let me change that to...most times in our life we just don’t know what is coming next. In fact what we think is best and what our expectations may be may not be how God is going to lead us in the journey.

God doesn’t guarantee us a smooth path, but we are to trust Him. Give Up...Expectations. Let Him do the leading. We must respond to the call.

Isaiah 55:8-9 New Living Translation (NLT) ⁸“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.⁹ For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

Dr. Dennis Kinlaw was President of Asbury College while I was there. I can still remember one of his quotes as he spoke in Hughes Auditorium, “God’s plans are better than your fondest dream!” Wow...think about that. Are our personal expectations and restrictions actually going to hinder God’s process? Oh to realize His plan is far better than our best dream.

Abraham is given a promise in these verses that is called the Abrahamic Covenant.

Genesis 12:2-3

THE 7 PROMISES OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

- 1. And I will make of you a great nation,**
- 2. and I will bless you**
- 3. and make your name great,**
- 4. so that you will be a blessing.³**
- 5. I will bless those who bless you,**
- 6. and him who dishonors you I will curse,**
- 7. and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”**

In our Wednesday night Bible Study we are studying Genesis. Even though this sermon and scripture passage was picked out months ago...it is interesting that on Wednesday night we began Genesis 12. One source I use to help is Warren Wiersbe's commentary. After this section on the Abrahamic covenant and the blessings he says something I had never thought of.

"God *blesses* us that we might be a *blessing* to others, and His great concern is that the whole world might be blessed. The missionary mandate of the church does not begin with John 3:16 or Matthew 28:18-20. IT begins with God's covenant with Abraham. We are *blessed* that we might be a *blessing*." (Wiersbe, Be Obedient, page 23)

So Abram received these promises...perhaps not realizing what they meant. Why he didn't even realize where he was going.

Genesis 12:4English Standard Version (ESV) ⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Oh the trust and the obedience. Abram went as the Lord told him. The disciples of Jesus responded to the call, "Follow Me." And they did. Some dropped their fishing nets, left their jobs and simply followed. Now notice when the call on Abram's life came. He was a card carrying member of AARP. By the way in this case AARP stands for Already Aged Religious Person. Let me give a shout out that we need people of all ages going, following, and joining in ministry. We need those 75 year olds men and women helping in nursery, teaching children, chaperoning and being with youth. They need you and you my friend need them. I want to challenge you during Lent...to spend some time with someone of a different generation. This means those with AARP cards reaching out to our young adults and youth and children. That also means for youth to try as they can to reach out to you. It's difficult. How many here will accept that challenge to reach out to someone not of your generation? XXXXXX

God is with you. **(Image) The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.**

Imagine what Abram must have felt like to leave his comfort zone and simply follow. I may have to add another sermon to the series entitled: "Give Up....Your Comfort Zone." God doesn't call us to be comfortable. I still remember an old preacher saying. The job of the pastor is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

Hebrews 11:8 New Living Translation (NLT) ⁸It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going.

Our following is not doing societies' expectation as hard as it may be, but it is listening, responding, and obeying God's call. To follow...as God told Abram... "I will show you."

Later on in chapter 12 of Genesis it says this:

Genesis 12:7-8 English Standard Version (ESV)

⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸ From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.

Wiersbe makes an interesting observation about this passage. The Tent marked him as a stranger and pilgrim, however the altar marked him as a citizen of heaven. In fact he built an altar and then pitched a tent. We have our tent's (our homes) but we ourselves are to be a living sacrifice to our Lord.

It comes down to obedience. So let's recap. We have your plan. And God's calling. Maybe it looks like this (**image**). A little different. Expectation vs. Reality.

I Give Up...Expectations. Not what I want/deserve/expect/or feel entitled to, but oh God what do YOU want. What and where are you calling.

Forgive me for one more time quoting from Wiersbe, “The same Lord who brought you *out*, brought you *in*, and brought you *on* your pilgrim journey will also bring you *through* if you follow Him by faith.” (Wiersbe, Be Obedient, page 28)

So if we give up expectations what do we have? If we follow the call and go where He will show us what will we have? We have His promise. One source I found said there are over 3500 promises of God in scripture. Another source said over 5400 Divine promises.

Oh Give Up...Expectations...and hear the promises of God:

1. God promised to bless Abraham and, through his descendants, the whole world (Jews and Gentiles) (Genesis 12:2–3). “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:28) This promise, called the Abrahamic Covenant,
2. God promised that if we search for Him we will find Him (Deuteronomy 4:29).
3. God promised that His love will never fail (1 Chronicles 16:34).
3. God promised He will be with us, wherever I go. Joshua 1:9
4. God promised that He will keep me in perfect peace if my mind is ‘stayed’ on Him. Isaiah 26:3
5. God promised salvation to all who believe in His Son (Romans 1:16–17).
6. God promised that all things will work out for good for His children (Romans 8:28).

7. God promised comfort in our trials (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).
8. God promised new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).
9. God promised to supply our needs (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19).
10. God promised He will never leave us or forsake us.” Hebrews 13:5
11. God promised that The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7
13. God promises he won’t let us be tried or tempted beyond what we can endure. 1 Corinthians 10:13
14. God promises to comforts the downcast-----including me. 2 Corinthians 7:6
15. God promises He will supply all our needs. Philippians 4:19
16. God promises that His grace will be sufficient. 2 Corinthians 12:9
17. God promise eternal life for believers. 1 John 5:11

To quote a song by Hillsong United (The Stand):

What could I say?

What could I do?

I’ll stand

With arms high and heart abandoned

My soul Lord to you surrendered

All I am is yours

God I Give Up...My Expectations....and follow Your call.