

**12** The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

**2** “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.[a] **3** I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

**4** So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. **5** He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

**6** Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. **7** The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring[c] I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

**8** From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

### **Are We There Yet?**

If you’ve ever been on a road trip with children you know the one question that will be asked multiple times. , “Are we there yet?” It’s not a bad question because the children are anticipating the end of the journey. They can’t wait to get to Grandma’s house or home and to be honest it’s a question I’ve asked myself through college and even beyond the seminary, “Am I there yet?” I’ve come to realize that, that’s not a question that goes away. I spent some time on the phone with another member this past week and she had the same question, “Are we there yet?” That is a question that I will ask the rest of my life all the way up to the very end when a pastor pronounces God’s blessing over a body, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Abram may very well have had the same question in mind when God called him to go. He’s been called by God to leave it all behind and go on a cross country trip to another land and he doesn’t even know where he is going or when he will get there. And yet, it’s as if God had in mind the incessant question of arrival from the back seat when he wrote Genesis 12 because he cuts the question off with, “I’ll tell you when we get there.”

We have questions, the when, the where, the how but like Abram we too should trust that God is faithful and his promise is certain even when the fulfillment of that

promise, even when arrival seems so far off and it looks like we will never get there. One thing we know for certain is that, "God will let us know when we get there."

God let Abram know when he got there. But at this point Abram is not yet Abraham. He is not the father of nations. He has no children. He's 75 years old. He isn't in the Promised Land. His father has just died and God appeared to him and calls him to leave everything behind. And the amazing happened. Abram left home, family, friends, culture to journey to a land he did not know. It's no wonder Abram is found among the heroes of faith in Hebrews chapter 11. It seems so easy for him to give up everything and go when God calls to him. Not even once do we hear him asking, "Are we there yet?" but rather obedience, "*Abram left, as the Lord has told him.*"

Later in life Abram remains obedient, when he is approaching 100 years old he still doesn't have any land. He only has a single son whom he is willing to give back to God. He still isn't a great nation and God's promises seem so far off but he's still not asking, "Are we there yet?"

Life wasn't easy for Abram but he was faithful. Life isn't easy for us either but are we faithful? If so why haven't we moved cross country to serve the Lord? I hope your answer would be, "Because God has not called us to move cross country." You can serve God right here in Lodi but just because God hasn't called you to do some massive feat of obedience doesn't mean he hasn't called you to be faithful. So how do your ventures fair? Are you there yet?

If you're like me you've probably backed out of the driveway a time or two only to go rushing back to the sin and problems of this world. When I compare my life to that of Abram I can't help but imagine how disappointed God must be with me. It's such a struggle for him to get me to go anywhere. If anything it's a demonstration of how often I am unfaithful to the Lord. I want to walk by faith. I want to trust God in all things, and never doubt, and never fear, and never worry. And I could beat myself up all day about how Abram lived that way, and so I should too. But God hasn't called us to be more like Abram but more like him.

Wasn't easy for Abram either and it's not as if his cross country traveling always arrived on time or even arrived at all. Just look how he starts off. God calls him to leave everything behind. "*Go from your country, your people, your father's household to the land I will show you.*" but then we read in verse 4, "*Lot went with him.*" I'm fairly certain Lot falls under the command, "*leave your father's household.*" Look where Lot leads. There is division among them. Lot moves closer and closer to Sodom. After Abram pleads for Sodom his nephew flees to the mountains where he has an incestuous relationship with

his daughters who give birth to the nations Moab and Ammon, who become enemies of God's people and lead them off after other gods. Then there is Abram's most famous failure when he moved to Egypt and told his wife to say, "I'm your my sister." Abram was afraid, often doubted the promises of God. More than once we see Abram as a real man, fighting real temptations, and failing again and again. **It's unfortunate that he's often portrayed as one of unquestioning obedience and one we should imitate because that reduces God's working in history down to a moralistic story rather than a progression of the promise through history.**

The question isn't, "Is Abram there yet?" but, "Is God here yet?" Is God faithful to his promises? God shows up and chooses Abram from among all the nations on earth. There is nothing special about Abram. According to Joshua 24 God came to Abram when he was worshipping other gods. He was an idolater. God has a habit of choosing the least likely candidate for the job. Abram was not naturally a man of great faith. Nor did he have some great spiritual gift of faith, or some secret to trusting God. But rather just like Saul became Paul. Abram became Abraham. And Paul uses Abram as an example of God saving not based on works but by faith. *Romans 4:3 Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.* It is by righteousness that comes by faith given to Abram by God. That righteousness remains even when tried and tested. Abram will fail many times but that doesn't mean he wasn't a Christian but that he too struggled with the sinful nature. Martin Luther described this struggle as that of a sick man suffering from sin but on their way to recovery as promised by a competent doctor. Meanwhile the man is both sick and well at the same time.

It's not that Abram had a great faith but rather he has a great God. Right from the start God made it clear, "Everything depends on me. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. I will give your descendants this land and through your offspring all peoples on the earth will be blessed when I send the promised Savior from your family line. Abram's unfaithfulness wasn't about to void God's promises. While Abram received a two-fold command, the Lord gave him a seven-fold promise.

God does this so that he alone might receive all glory and honor. God not only chose Abram but he also equipped him. God gave him the faith to trust his promise. God grew that faith little by little. Picking Abram up when he fell, repeating the promise when he doubted. God always keeps his promises. Abram hears these promises and acts on them. He went out marking out that territory. He calls on the name of the Lord. He builds an altar to the Lord as God breaks into Canaan and claims the land as his own. Abram

didn't do this so that God would love him but because God loves him and made these promises. He didn't have to ask, "Are we there yet?" because he knew God will let me know.

God will let us know when we get there. He has let us know who we are and where we are. He lets us know in baptism that we are his children. He lets us know again in Lord's Supper that our sins have been taken away. He speaks to us clearly in his word and tells us where we are at in our standing with him. Like Abram this isn't based on our works but God's promise. And his promises find fulfillment in Jesus. In fact all nations on earth have been blessed through Abram because through his descendants Jesus came into the world. Jesus then lived the perfect life we never could, humbled himself to death and then came back to inform us, "We've made it." Abram looked forward to God's arrival and in Jesus God announces, "God is here." We too hear the promises of God and then act on them.

God has not called us to leave our homes and families and live in a foreign land but we are to be willing to leave them behind. We are to honor him above all things. God has given us specific commands, "Go...make disciples... teach..." Our God has also backed them up with more promises than the seven he gave Abram. He tells us, "*I will give you rest. I will forgive your wickedness and remember your sin no more. I have gone to prepare a place for you. I will return to take you with me. I will never leave you nor forsake you.*" Are we there yet? No. But God is here.

God gives us the opportunity to listen to his promises and obey his commands, put our faith in action not because of the size of your faith but because of the size of his promises! God is more faithful to his promise than his people are to him. We all fail but that doesn't mean we aren't Christian. Our righteousness is greater than our sin, because the righteousness of Jesus greatly surpasses the sin of the entire world. We are saved the same way Abram was saved, that by grace, through faith in the fulfillment of the promise. God remains faithful to us, even when we are faithless, questioning his goodness, and the direction he is leading us.

Sit tight. God's promises may seem like a long time in coming but God is faithful. He won't let us down and until then we can rejoice and act on his word. If you've fallen away from his promise, fallen off the wagon back into sin and or pulled back into temptation. Realize the promise is still certain. Repent. We'll get there but until that time when God proclaims, "We're here." Take your medicine. That's why the ten commandments are placed first in the Catechism - so we recognize our sickness. The creeds then show us

where to find medicine. The rest show us how to live out this life after taking the medicine. You may have questions and that's not bad but always remember God will come. He has come. He will come again.