

Growing Our Faith

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18 (March 13, 2022)

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

¹After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” ²But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³And Abram said, “You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.” ⁴But the word of the Lord came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.” ⁵He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” ⁶And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness. ⁷Then he said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.” ⁸But he said, “O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” ⁹He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. ¹¹And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. ¹²As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.

¹⁷When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,

Historical Context

God reinforces His promise using a means of “signing a contract” that was common in that day. That’s what the ritual involving the animal carcasses is about. In essence, if you wanted to make a contract with someone, you would use this ritual as a way of saying, “May the same thing happen to me if I break my promise.”

Theme: Growing Our Faith

At an age when most people are enjoying their twilight years, Abraham and Sarah left everything behind because God called them. They did so based on a promise that God would bless them and would make of them a great nation (Gen. 12:1-3). Over the years, God continued to interact with Abraham and Sarah, repeating and confirming this promise. In today’s reading, Abraham questions that promise. While that may seem like a strange way to express faith, ignoring or suppressing our questions deprives us of the opportunity to grow our faith.

It’s understandable that we may not want to face our questions about God head on. Some of them can be frightening. Especially the ones that deal with the mystery of human suffering. It can be incredibly difficult to face the question of why bad things happen to good people. But like Abraham, when we face our questions, or perhaps even better, when we voice our questions to God, we give ourselves the chance of growing in our faith. It provides an opportunity for us to deepen our trust in God’s promise. As we examine our faith during Lent, one way of developing the heart of trust and the eyes of faith is to give full voice to our questions about God. We may never get an answer to all our questions, but when we allow our questions to come out into the open, we open our hearts to experience the awareness that God really is God, and that we can entrust our lives into God’s loving care.