

2nd Sunday in Lent
Year A

Genesis 12:1-4a
Psalm 121
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
John 3:1-17

In all aspects of our lives, we are dependent on someone else. Although we, in our culture, want to feel like we are self-made people who can lift themselves up by their bootstraps, none of us are truly self-made. We rely on others. This is pointed out in our readings today.

In Genesis, we see a major shift in focus. Up to this point, Genesis has been the story of God's interaction with all of the world. Now, the focus shifts to the life and family of a single individual – Abram. God tells Abram to leave home and venture out to an unknown place. This is a direct command, but with a promise. Abram is to go from all that is familiar, everything that has kept him going and follow a gut feeling – to travel somewhere else that God will show him.

This beginning is a major step of faith. Abram can only trust that he really is hearing from God and that God will fulfill the promise. Remember, Abram is already 75 years old, with no children and no real prospect of having any. Sarai, his wife, is also very old, well beyond the age of childbearing. But, Abram believes and goes.

Perhaps the psalm was an inspiration to him. Some authorities hold that it was this psalm that Abram spoke as he raised the knife in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac. "Where is my help to come? My help comes from the Lord." As he traveled west with his household, perhaps this was what ran through Abram's mind. "The Lord shall preserve you." With that guidance, Abram trusted God would take care of him.

Traveling to a new home is not the only time we are dependent upon others. Nicodemus discovered that in his encounter with Jesus. He already knew that Jesus was sent by God. How else could He do all of these mighty acts? But, he still had questions. The first statement from Jesus did nothing to help answer those questions. What did Jesus mean that he must be born from above, or as it may also be translated, born anew? How can anyone be born a second time?

Too often, we see this expression used to encourage us to do something. We are made to feel that it is our responsibility to be born anew. How can this be? We really had nothing to do with our first birth. I dare ask any mother if they had a child who pushed its way into the world. It is the mother, sometimes with assistance from others, that caused the baby to be born. Therefore, how can we expect any person to be responsible for their own rebirth? Jesus says we need to be born from above. We need to be born of water and the Spirit. That does not sound like anything we are capable of doing on our own. So, how are we born anew? It is the work of the Spirit.

In all aspects of our life, and especially in our walk with God, we are dependent on God. In one of the most well known verses of scripture we learn that it is God's love for the entire world that makes all of this possible. It is God who sent Jesus into the world, not to condemn the world, but

to save all, to bring everyone into the light of day. Through Jesus, we all can be brought into the light of God's grace. It is not anything we can do for ourselves, but something God has already provided for us. It is not until the end of this gospel that we finally discover that Nicodemus found the light.

Like Abram, if we trust the promises of God, we will see great things happen in our lives. We may not become a great nation, or even a great congregation, but we will know that our help comes from God.