

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

traditional land of the Three Fires Confederacy: the Odawa, Potawatami and Ojibwe.

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519-683-2442 standrewspcdresden@gmail.com Rev. Andy Cornell

Worship This Week Sept. 3, 2023

Piano – Dorothy O’Neill

Sound/powerpoint/livestream –

WELCOME & Prayer –

Two SONGS – Shout to the Lord, 10,000 Reasons

YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART – Andy

If you were a bird, what kind would you be?

Chicken – Keep their heads down. Scratch in the dirt for food. Never reach full potential. Flap their wings but don’t fly far. When storms come they race for the chicken coop.

Parrot – Can only imitate what they have heard. They talk the talk but that’s it. Say the right things but don’t live sincerely.

Crow – intelligent, good memory, but can leave terrible messes behind

Eagle – Not fearful. Face into a storm and use its power to lift off and soar. Build giant nests in high places and make them bigger as their family grows. They are loyal and dedicated to their family. They don’t flap their wings much so they don’t get tired out—they just soar on the current. They can see for miles. Flies higher and higher to find safety (closer to God). They take care of themselves--cleaning themselves and taking time to rest in the sun.

Kid’s PRAYER – Andy

SONG – Those who wait upon the Lord

RECEIVE OFFERING –

ANNOUNCEMENTS – Bible Study starts in September.

GOOD NEWS MOMENTS –

PRAYER REQUESTS/PRAYER –

SCRIPTURE – Genesis 12:1-3 then 4-9

We’re going to take a deeper look at those three monumental verses at the start of Genesis 12. Seminaries and Bible colleges take several weeks to study this – so two weeks isn’t overdoing it. The first three verses of Chapter 12 contain those great promises from God to Abraham. They are the foundation of the Nation of Israel, God’s people, from whom we are direct descendants. We share in those promises. The clear message in these three verses is that if we want to thrive spiritually, we require

obedience to God and faith in His ways. Let's read them again. As we hear the words, listen for one particular word which stands out. Hint – it's repeated.

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you." (12:1-3)

MESSAGE –

The key word is "will." It's definite. Nothing tentative about it. All of which means it will happen. There are six specific promises.

First, I will make you into a great nation. It would take about 700 years for the nation to reach greatness under kings David and Solomon. World dominance only lasted for a few generations – very short and nothing compared to the Roman, Babylonian, Ottoman and British empires. Israel's dominance in world history is more spiritual. For Jewish people throughout history, it's been the Promised Land. For Christians, it's the Holy Land. For Muslims, it's where their prophet ascended to heaven. For a nation that has only nine million people, it's considered among the top 10 most powerful nations, even though its modern state has only been established for 75 years.

I will bless you. Keep in mind that God is not talking only about Abram/Abraham – and by logical extension Serai/Sarah. He will bless them by providing them with children. God's blessing is more to be found upon Abraham and Sarah's children and the generations to follow. Throughout the Bible, God's hands delivered the nation from its enemies. Most of the Old Testament revolves around that theme.

I will make you famous. Abraham and Sarah's descendants will become the nation of Israel and will be at the centre of world politics for the rest of human history. Geographically and population wise, the modern state of Israel is very small. But its influence on geopolitics is enormous.

You will be a blessing to others. Remember that Jesus – the Son of God and the only hope for the world – is a Jew. Salvation is only through Him. Jesus' return in human form (a central pillar in the Christian faith) will happen only after Israel accepts Him as the Son of God as the Lord himself stated in Matthew 23:27-29. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the

city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me. And now, look, your house is abandoned and desolate. For I tell you this, you will never see me again until you say, 'Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! "

I will bless those who bless you. Nations today which do not recognize Israel and have no diplomatic relations also have very poor human rights records – they're terrible places to live. It's a direct connection. On the flipside, those nations which are Israel's best friends also happen to be places which have healthiest human rights and protection of freedoms.

I will curse those who treat you with contempt. Among Satan's schemes is to prevent the Kingdom from coming. (Even though there's no way the enemy can win, he still perseveres.) The devil works through antisemitism, which reached a low point in the Holocaust. Many ancient nations are nonexistent now because of God's judgment for attacking Israel: Edom, Assyria, Sodom and Babylon were all wiped out. Same with the Hittite, Moabite or Philistine people.

All the families on earth will be blessed through you. Consider that every Jewish person, every Christian and every Muslim are descended from Abraham and Sarah. God blesses people of faith. On this note, I am going to be charitable to Muslims – even though they do not know Christ as saviour (only as prophet) I still believe that God may be working through them. To be clear: Islam is not the Way. But it's closer to the Way than being agnostic, atheist or satanic. Let's just focus on Christ followers. Most of the advancements in science, technology, education, medicine, arts, architecture, politics, literature, music, philosophy, philanthropy, ethics, sexual morality, business, civil rights and psychotherapy have been led by Christians.

With all of that in mind, let's look at Abraham and Sarai's journey.

"So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan." (v. 4-5)

Even before the promises and the journey, God had already blessed Abram with wealth. God provides for the journey.

A bit of a geography lesson. That this was not just a day's hike, or even two. They were about to embark on a 800 km journey that would take seven days on foot, non stop. So likely a few weeks. This would be the second leg of the journey. Recall that Abram was in Haran only because his father was commanded by God to leave Babylon (modern day Iraq) which was 1,100 km. We talked last week about the journey we are sometimes called to take.

"When they arrived in Canaan, Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites." (v. 5-6)

Canaan was populated by tribes that were set in violence and sin, as we read in later in Genesis 34 and 15. Not a hospitable place. God doesn't promise that the journey would be easy. He may (and probably will) take us through unfriendly places but He will be with us always. He sets up camp and then something remarkable: The Lord makes a personal appearance.

"Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." (v. 7)

God repeats His promises when necessary. Given the unfriendly nature of the place, this makes sense. Abram and Serai likely needed encouragement. Their response is noteworthy.

"And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the Lord, who had appeared to him."

The first thing he did was give thanks. Throughout scripture, we are told that healthy and powerful prayer begins with thanks. Dedication is important. Public buildings have ceremonies to dedicate them. Sometimes they include prayer. Church buildings are always dedicated. But we are more than a building, as the sign out front and our website states. We dedicate everything we do to God's glory and in pursuit of His will. As fallen people who give into the temptation and sin so easily, it's vital that we are constantly reminded of the mission. Dedication is the foundation of that.

"After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the Lord, and he worshiped the Lord. 9 Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev." (v. 8-9)

Another leg of the journey is followed by another altar and dedication. And worship.

Note that they don't build homes. They pitch tents. Even in the land God gave him, Abram never lived in a house — he always lived in a tent. Tents are the home of those who are just passing through and do not put down permanent roots. That would come much later – generations down the road.

Last week, we talked about what set Abram apart. Anyone remember? Moses was the great lawgiver; Joshua a great general; David a great king, and Elijah a great prophet. Mose was known **for his faith**. It's important to recognize that the person who God used to build his nation, the nation from which came the Son of God, that person is best known for his faith. Without faith, God could not have used Abram and his family.

In a sense, all believers are tent-dwellers and pilgrims. Our real home, our permanent dwelling place, is in heaven.

We are temporary residents and foreigners. When we consider that the world has been given over to Satan – who can choose to bless and empower people who follow him – it makes sense for us not to be “of the world – just in the world.” This planet is not our true home – don't get too comfortable.

A pilgrim or temporary resident is not a drifter. We have a purpose or a goal with our presence in this world. God has given each of us a mission. Abram and Serai were to produce a family that would evolve into a Great and Holy Nation that would bless the world – and through which the world would find salvation.

If we are true believers – if we have accepted Christ as the way, the truth and the life – then we have marching orders from the King. Our journey may be physical, going from place to place. Or it may be spiritual, reaching out to people in our midst. But whether it's around the world or in our neighbourhoods, it's still a journey and a mission.

Ask ourselves: what's the mission? Ask it of yourself and your family. The congregation, through its elders, are invited to regularly ask the same question. God blessed Abram and Serai and sent them out. They did not know the outcome, only the big promises. Their faith kept them going.

Fair to say that God has blessed this congregation with location and a building, a decent financial legacy and – most importantly – with people of faith who journey from their

homes each week to be here or watch online. These are powerful ingredients. What do we do? We are invited to ask that question early and often. God will answer in His own way and on His timing. Do we have faith to believe that?

HYMN – 644 May the mind of Christ my Saviour

BENEDICTION –

NEW PRAYER

1. Thanks for the life of Joyce MacTavish, peace and strength for sons Brian, Bruce, Murray and their families.
2. Betty Bradley recently moved to Albany Retirement Village in Petrolia.

CONTINUE TO PRAY

Health and healing –

1. Betty Bradley, Becky Desjardine, Margaret Follows, Ron Mason, Bette Northcott, Tom O’Neill, Cherie Pegg, Sandra Pegg, Julie Shaw, Mary Whitson, Sandra Whitson
2. Anyone seeking or undergoing treatment for addictions
3. Anyone wrestling with anxiety and depression
4. Karen Northcott – continue to pray.

There are many whose names are not listed here – God knows who they are and what they need.

Seniors and shut ins – Dianne Richards at Park Street Place, Jim Lusk at Oaks Wallaceburg, Lane Douglas and Ross Fuchs at Fairfield Park in Wallaceburg, Bill Lozon at Copper Terrace, Aubrey Butler at home.

Session – Mark Labadie (clerk and representative elder), Cindy Brewer, Sheila Eves, Andrew Neely, Mark Richards and Julie Shaw.

Board of managers – Wendy Weston (chair), Will Brewer, Linda Malott, Jenn Mason, Von Parking, Mark Richards, Jodie Rich, Dan Shaw, Bob Vriesema and Mike Wicks.

WHAT’S UP:

New study – Small group study and discussion continues this fall in partnership with Evangel Pentecostal Tabernacle. It’s St. Andrew’s turn to host. We’ll be studying “Prayer: does it make any difference?” by Philip Yancy. No suspense here – it makes a huge difference in the lives of people and the world at large. We accept that. So why is it so difficult and why do we labour over it? It can be frustrating, confusing and even mysterious. Using a DVD teaching and a reader’s guide, Yancy helps us meet God all over again, asking and answering such key questions as: is He listening? What’s the point? Can prayer be more satisfying? Dates and times to be announced.

Elders on session – Mark Labadie 519-359-4842, Cindy Brewer 519-683-4113, Sheila Eves 519-683-4148, Andrew Neely 519-359-8903, Mark Richards 519-809-9175 and Julie Shaw 226-627-1953.

Membership -- We’ve been blessed with several new families in recent years. If any of you newcomers are interested in becoming a member of the congregation, let us know. The last time we received new members as a group was in 2019. Membership is not essential to being in the church family. But what it

allows is the ability to vote on calling a new minister and electing new elders. It's also required in order to be considered for eldership. Session's plan is to formally receive new members in the fall.

Eldership -- Session is still interested in adding at least two to its ranks. Nominations will be received in September. Eldership is a divine calling. Ruling elders are responsible for the leadership, pastoral care and oversight of the congregation. They are ordained using the same vows as ministers.

GOOD NEWS MOMENTS

DATES

Sept. 3 – The Chapelaires at Dresden Christian Concerts, 6:30 p.m.

Sept. 10 – Sunday School resumes. Coffee resumes after worship.

Sept. 11 – Session meets 7 p.m.

GIVING:

E-transfer st.andrewspcdresdenon@gmail.com. Bring envelope on Sunday or if you have a key, leave it in the treasurer's mailbox. Mail it to the church, PO Box 93 Dresden. N0P 1M0.

Gift Cards – You pay face value for the gift cards and the church buys them at a discount through Chatham Christian Schools. Next deadline TBA.