

Prayer of the Holy Spirit

Good Morning Beloved Ones!

As we've discussed the past few weeks, we are inheritors of God's trust, love, attention and power. The crux of our Christian life is to remember that we are sent into this world to share faith, offer prayer, and gather hope so that lives are transformed.

If you were at the Ordination service, you heard the Bishop say, 'transformed lives transform lives!'

The goals of our church were written with these concepts in mind...to increase the engagement of the generations, to increase the participation and to increase the footprint in the community. In short, invite and engage with people so that whoever we meet knows we are from Saint James and that we've got some good news to share that will make a difference to your life.

To meet these goals we must be people who look up and out, who see people and greet others with hospitality and friendliness, who know who we are as loved children of God and heirs with an inheritance to share, NOT hoard for ourselves.

With this in mind, we embark on a series focused on Sharing our God Story. You see, in order to transform lives, we must know and articulate our story of transformation... in word, in song, in how we treat others, and in how we welcome one another.

Traveling to a new place (school, neighborhood, congregation, or country) can be scary... especially so if you don't know anyone or the language of the area.

My first travel experience to a country that spoke a language other than English was daunting. I had to lean on my inheritance of trust, attention, power, and love to step out of the car, step by step proceed through TSA check-in, step onto the plane, and step onto foreign soil. I had to rely on the professor and tour guides, as well as the collective reasoning of our group,

at times. As Seminary students deep in theological reflection, we knew we were NOT the first sojourners to another place. Today's passage from Genesis fed our collective souls as we navigated the streets and roads of Jordan, Amman, and the desert byways.

I can only imagine the conversation Abraham had with his family as they prepared to go forth to the 'promised' land. Together, Abraham & Sarah set a path for us to follow as we strive to share the blessings we have as the faith community known as Saint James.

Sharing stories is a primary means of communicating information and culture from one generation to the next. At one time it was telling and re-telling stories by word of mouth, around the meal, around the campfire, through song. These days we have written and photo stories, enhanced by social media like Instagram, snapchat, and other video/photo apps.

The point is, at every age, we tell stories. God has revealed God's self to us through stories... recorded in the bible is the greatest love story ever told... how God's love created people, how God desires relationship with God's people, and how the story of this unfailing relationship is passed to generations of faithful communities.

In the Genesis passage, we see how God chose Abram to be one of the first to carry the story...to be the first ambassadors to the nations.

God did this to put in motion the plan for full restoration of God's people. For having been created in God's image, the first man and woman disobeyed and were sent out to work and care for each other until humanity could be fully restored.

So God chose Abraham and all of his inheritors (nation of Israel) to carry the message of who God is and the ways of how God loves through a COVENANT promise.

So to be clear, Covenant is more than a promise. It is a contract between two parties... 'Rooted in real-life economic, political, and social transactions.' 'This covenant is a legal relationship, a legal oath.' (*B.Birch, et al.*

*A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament, p78.*)

So, Abraham has left his homeland, his family, and his social/economic connections to follow God's direction. Abraham responds to God with faithfulness and righteousness. And for his faithfulness, the LORD will make a nation, have respect, and be blessed. The details of the covenant are noted later in v7 (land & descendants). Truly, this is a people who are founded in faithfulness & righteousness and stories of God's love, provision and faithfulness.

The covenant is more than just something of a reward... it is a directive to share...'they are blessed to be a blessing.' They are to bless the nations, not just their neighbors. Truly, all people are blessed through Abraham and his descendants...this is their mission...their why.

So as Christians, we are inheritors, grafted onto Abrahams' lineage through faith in Jesus Christ. We become inheritors of the promise...as we heard in Galatians... and we inherit the mandate to be a blessing to the nations.

Together, you & I are called to share our God story, in words and in actions. We are to share how our stories intertwine with God's bigger story.

So we will explore what it means to tell God's story in our sphere of influence...in the group of people you already see & know & have relationship with so that we can go out to share with all nations...

God has a story to tell, and God calls us to share that story, and to bless the nations. How might this happen... consider these thoughts:

- What would it look like to be a blessing to someone? To do a random act of kindness?
  - How? Make a blessing bag full of useful items to keep in your car, and give it to someone who needs a helping hand.
- What would it look like to tell/share with the person who is helping you through a tough time? Or a care giver? How you've felt hope in time of hopelessness?
- What would it look like to be an extra blessing to family who just don't understand your why of going to church?

- What would it look like to share how you find time to breathe and have peace in the midst of running kids and people and errands for others all the time?
- What would it look like to share a peaceful moment or God story with those you are transporting in the car?

There are so many ways we can be a blessing to others...to the nations.

- Immigration rally... all alone, searching for others, line of cars, people walking... testimony of what it means to those who live in fear...

Pray about how you can see another and bless them.

Ask for God to provide the opportunity to bless others, and trust that God will provide the all that is needed. (VBS!)

We live between the beginning & the end, the book of Genesis & the book of Revelation.

The question is what role we will play as faithful followers and inheritors.

Be thinking of your God story...that moment that you became aware of God's work in your life. Write it down...snap photos or find photos of that moment.

We will have the opportunity to share and perhaps produce a story book of God's stories in Saint James.

Amen.

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The inheritance of our faith is to attend to God. • To attend to God's work and witness in the world. • To attend to Christ's command to love God and neighbor. • To attend to the Spirit's stirrings deep within us and in those around us.