

Pondering August 2022

August is upon us, two-a-days, school supply shopping, getting back into rhythm after the summer break. We just finished thirty-one days of reading thirty-one chapters of Proverbs including all the delays and hiccups Facebook Live can present. Yes, I know there are ways to smooth things out, edit, even pre-record so that the final product is smooth and appealing. Could there be a reason why I chose not to do it that way? Yes, I wanted raw recordings with dogs barking in the background and delays, just because life happens. So often we tend to create the impression that we are perfect and are having it all together. However, that is not how life works. When it comes to our walk with Jesus we can just go back to where we left off and restart. GOD is ever more willing to receive us back than we are willing to ask for GOD's forgiveness. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. At the end of 31 days – plus or minus a day or two – we will have finished Proverbs. For some of us it might have even been the first time.

What I love about Scripture is the fact that the Bible does not white-wash the heroes and heroines of the faith. People have their quirks, and some families are outright dysfunctional, but the Bible tells their stories to give us hope and prove that GOD can write straight even on crooked lines.

One of these stories that I have been led to by the Holy Spirit in recent weeks is found in Genesis 13 and 14. It is a story of GOD's promise, provision, and faithfulness, of family, strife, separation, and rescue. Shall we have a look?

Abram returns from Egypt with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot. They are all herdsmen and Genesis 13:2 points out, "Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold." And that in a season of famine! Lot did very well for himself, too. So well actually, that both of their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together (v.6) and their herdsmen were constantly quarreling with each other (v.7).

Abram calls on Lot and they look at the whole Land of Promise before them and Abram basically says, "it is time that each of us is going his own way. Abram recommends separation and gives Lot the privilege to choose which part of the land, desert, or well-watered river valley. Since GOD's invitation to seek out the Promised Land and to be the recipient of GOD's blessing was directed at Abram and Lot just came along for the ride, Abram would have had the right to dictate to Lot where to go and claim the better land for himself, yet Abram trusted in GOD's provision.

After Lot left Abram GOD is releasing the next level of blessing upon Abram (v. 14-15), and Abram moved in accordance with GOD's guidance. When Lot and his family are kidnapped by enemy forces Abram leads 318 trained men fighting the kidnappers and saving his kinsmen and possessions (Genesis 14:14-16).

United Methodist are currently going through a season of discernment figuring out which direction every congregation for herself will choose. The land is before us, and we can turn this way or that way. Many of us are discerning if and how to enter the discernment process that the United Methodist Church in general and our Annual Conference in particular have prescribed.

The important point is that Abram experienced GOD's blessing even under adverse circumstances, e.g. arid lands, contentious family members, enemies on every side, etc. because he had learned to listen to GOD and then to walk out his faith – literally (Genesis 13:17-18).

May we all walk with the LORD and arrive at the destination that GOD has in store for us.

In CHRIST's Unfailing Love

Pastor J. Paul <><