

2<sup>nd</sup> S. in Lent 3/16/14  
Genesis 12:1-9 A

NOW THE LORD SAID TO ABRAM, “GO FROM YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR KINDRED AND YOUR FATHER’S HOUSE TO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.”

And God said to Abram, “Go Now!”

But you know what? I just don’t think I could have done it. Just what you want to hear from your pastor, right? I know, it’s not a good thing for your pastor to say he wouldn’t do what God commanded. But, look at what Abram was leaving. God could not be more specific – Leave your country, your family and your father, leave everything behind that gives you stability, any sense of security, not to mention those things that just bring joy to your life. We can use cell phones and Skype to stay in contact with our loved ones. But not so with Abram (his name was later changed to Abraham). This was long before the days of cell phones, or phones of any kind for that matter, and Skype. His doing what God told him to do would completely cut him off from his family. His family would go on doing their thing; Abram just wouldn’t be part of it. He wouldn’t inherit his father’s land, his children – if he were to have any – would not know their grandparents; they would never meet their cousins. God’s command to Abram was truly one-sided. It wasn’t just leave. It was leave *everything* behind. What God wants to do to Abram is to completely disconnect him from his past – leave it all behind. I just don’t know if I could have done that.

I don’t think you could have done it, either. You live in your home, because you like it there. You probably spent a lot of time and energy and money making it the way you like it. Your Lazy-boy, your bed, big-screen TV are there. The colors are the way you like them. And, aside from that one in-law or that one cousin, you don’t mind being around your family. In fact, you kind of like it – especially you grandparents, having your grandkids around. These are the things that give you stability, a sense of security, not to mention these things just bring joy to your life. Could you leave all that behind?

We consider Abram a great man of faith, but even as a great man of faith, he had trouble doing what God commanded. Moses gives us a clue in our lesson, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house...”. That sounds simple enough. In fact, in the original language,

there's even a little more dramatic force, "Go *now!*" And how does our hero react? He does what God commands, right? Well, not exactly – "So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him." Oh, oh. What's this – Lot going with him? Lot was one of his "kindred" that he was to leave behind. As it turns out, Abram would regret taking Lot along. Lot would end up being a lot of trouble. If Abram had listened to God, he would have spared himself a lot of heartache. Honestly, isn't that always the case? How much heartache do we have because we do not listen to God in His Word?

And, there's another thing. In Joshua 24:3, God tells the people, "Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan..." God is telling us He is the One who made it happen. You could say that God **pushed** Abram out of his homeland and dragged him around the land of Canaan. Over and over again, Abram showed he was weak in doing what God wanted and trusting that God would do what He promised.

For example, Abram was given the most beautiful woman in the land to be his wife. Sari was not only beautiful, but she was the way God has promised to deliver His promises to Abram. And yet, Abram lied twice about her being his wife in order to save his own skin.

God promised that he and Sarah would a son, the first-born of a great nation. Abraham took matters into his own hands and fathered a child with another woman.

Over and over again, Abram showed himself to be doubtful of God's promises. That's why St. Paul says, "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God (Ro 4:2)." In fact, Abraham had nothing to boost about before God. Everything that God asked Him to do, he did imperfectly. If God had not stepped in over and over again, Abraham would have messed everything up over and over again. In spite of Abraham's doubts and unfaithfulness, God still kept His promises. God's promises kept everything going in Abram's life.

We are cut from the same bolt of cloth as Abram a little more than we care to admit. God has called us to us, but, just like Abram, we are quick to modify what God tells us to do. He tells us to go now and make disciples, and we sit on our hands ... and our checkbooks. He tells us to love our

neighbor and we lie and cheat, gossip and keep a record of wrongs. He tells us to pray for our enemies, but we pray for them to “get what’s coming to them.” God tells us through St. Paul, “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,” but we pretty comfortable here in this world, conforming ourselves to its ways.

Repent. The season of Lent is a time of special reflection and renewal. Seeing our sin, seeing our doubts, our weakness, and our unfaithfulness, we know that we cannot muster up within ourselves to live as we have been called. Instead, God’s promise makes it happen.

God promised to bless you and me through Abraham and He did it in Jesus Christ. God said to His Son, “Go Now!” Jesus did not falter like Abram, like you, and like me. He obeyed His Father’s will, was born of Virgin Mother, and took upon Himself all your disregard and refusal to do what God asks of you; all your love of earthly stuff and your love of ease; your refusal to leave the ways of this fallen world behind; your doubts of God’s promises. He carried them all to the cross, where He bled and died for you. It is that shedding of His precious blood that wipes away every part of sin in that we do, and say, and think. That’s how much your Father in heaven loves you – He does not hold you accountable for you sin, He does not punish with temporally or eternally for them. He remembers His promise – and saves you in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. “Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God,” Jesus said to Nicodemus. What Jesus meant was that in the new birth of Holy Baptism, we become a new creation in Him. He lives in us and we live in Him. God the Holy Spirit works faith in us so that we trust, rejoice, and find comfort in Jesus alone, and we walk with Jesus.

Which is good news for us. In the weakness of our mortal nature, we are often reluctant, filled with fear and doubt to do what God commands, or we modify it in way that we can live with, or we just ignore it altogether. We are weak, but He is strong. Jesus is with us and He does His work in us through the hearing of the Word and the eating and drinking of His Body and Blood, so that He can do His work in us. Paul says it this way in the book of Philippians, “it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (2:13).”

Your Lord Christ has called you in your Baptism to be Christ to your neighbor. That means that He make disciples, comforts one grieving the lost of a loved one; helps clean your neighbor's basement after a flood, restores the lost sheep who has wandered from the faith, feeds and clothes your child, through you.

Always, Jesus is with us that we may hear His voice and follow Him in the way that leads to eternal life. And when we fail, when we walk imperfectly, when we sin, Jesus forgives us. That is God's promise to you and God's promises make it happen.

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# Concordia Lutheran Church

*The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*

801 Beacon Lane

Beulah, North Dakota

Rev. Toby H. Heller, Pastor

March 16, 2014



*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son,  
that whoever believes in Him should not perish  
but have eternal life.*

*John 3:16*

**Divine Service**

Setting Three

**Hymn of Invocation**

# 596 (st. 1-4)

**Confession & Absolution**

p. 184

**Introit**

He remembers his covenant forever,

**the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations.**

Seek the Lord and his strength;

**seek his presence continually!**

Remember the wondrous works that he has done,

**his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,**

O offspring of Abraham, his servant,

**children of Jacob, his chosen ones!**

He is the Lord our God;

**his judgments are in all the earth.**

He remembers his covenant forever,

**the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations.**

**Gloria Patri**

p. 186

**Kyrie**

p. 186

**Gloria In Excelsis:** *omitted during Lent*

**Salutation & Collect**

p. 189

O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

### **Old Testament Reading: Genesis 12:1-9 (ESV)**

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

### **Gradual**

O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,  
**the founder and perfecter of our faith,**  
who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,  
despising the shame,  
**and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

### **Epistle Reading: Romans 4:1-8, 13-17 (ESV)**

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

**“Alleluia”:** *omitted during Lent*

**Holy Gospel:** St. John 3:1-17 (ESV)

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered him, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is*



*born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except Him who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life."

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.*

<b>Apostles' Creed</b>	p. 192
<b>Hymn of the Day</b>	# 542
<b>Sermon</b>	
<b>Offertory</b>	p. 192
<b>Offering</b>	
<b>Prayer of the Church</b>	
<b>Service of the Sacrament</b>	p. 194
<b>Distribution Hymns: # 555 (st. 1, 6-9)</b>	629, 571
<b>Nunc Dimittis</b>	p. 199
<b>Thanksgiving</b>	p. 200
<b>Benedicamus and Benediction</b>	p. 201
<b>Closing Hymn</b>	# 718

**Welcome to worship** in the season of Lent, the time of following Jesus to the cross. Lent teaches us that it was our sin which caused Jesus to suffer and die. As we confess our sin, our great comfort comes from the promise of God, “Whenever we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).” Visitors, please sign our guest book and worship with us again soon.

**The Great Deceiver:** Is Satan a real being, or just an outdated representation of evil? The Bible speaks of him as a rebel angel leading his followers against God and all of God’s children. Please join us this morning, as we begin a new Bible study, “The Great Deceiver.” We will learn what the Bible has to say about our ancient foe.



Our midweek worship continues this Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 p.m. “The King Denied” will be the focus of our worship. Please join us for soup and sandwiches at 5:30 p.m. served by the Elders and LYF.

**The March calendar,** Pray for Us calendar, birthday and anniversary sheet, January council minutes and “My Devotions” for the children are in the black stacking trays in the social hall.

**Hazen Memorial Hospital Auxiliary** will be hosting their annual Turkey Dinner with all the trimmings and homemade pie on today from 11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. at the Hazen City Hall. Free will offering. All proceeds will be given to Sakakawea Medical Center and used to provide continuing excellent patient care. We hope to see you there!



Today we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion in which we joyfully receive Christ's Body and Blood, under bread and wine, for the forgiveness of our sins. As we celebrate the Sacrament, we also give public witness that we are in complete agreement with the denomination's doctrinal teachings at whose altar we commune. Therefore, we ask that only communicant members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod commune with us. All guests are asked to talk to Rev. Heller before coming to the altar to receive the Sacrament.

### **In our thoughts and prayers,**

† Kyle Miller (Nona Blaisdell's brother);

† Our Catechism students.



### **Stewardship of Offerings & Attendance**

Attendance: 91   Offerings: \$3,744.00

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” This is perhaps the most well-known and well-beloved verse in the New Testament – and for good reason. This simple Gospel message is the foundation for our whole life – our new life in Christ. This new life is characterized by thankfulness and devotion to our Father who has provided for us so lavishly in Christ.

### ***We are the ND District...***

Tomorrow is St. Patrick's Day. St. Patrick was a missionary in Ireland with quite a story—you can Google it. Why do we speak of so much evangelism, witness, and missionary work in the Lutheran Church? We know of the love of Christ Jesus. In our love for our family and neighbor, we share this good news, inviting them to Jesus. Our witness often times begins with caring for someone, as God gives us opportunity to build that opportunity to build that relationship to eventually share our faith.

President Barneck

## † This Week at Concordia †

Sunday	8:30 am	Divine Service
	9:30 am	Sunday School/Bible Class
	11:00 am	<i>Worship @ Glen Ullin</i>
Monday	7:00 pm	Sarah Guild
Tuesday	2:00 pm	Bible Class
Wednesday	3:30 pm	1 <sup>st</sup> -year Catechism
	4:30 pm	2 <sup>nd</sup> -year Catechism
	5:30 pm	Soup/Sandwiches— LYF & Elders
	6:30 pm	Lenten Service
	7:15 pm	Chime Practice
	7:45 pm	Bell Practice
Thursday	7:00 pm	<i>Lenten Service @ Glen Ullin</i>
Sunday	8:30 am	Divine Service
	9:30 am	Sunday School/Bible Class
	11:00 am	<i>Worship @ Glen Ullin</i>

### Church Office Hours

Monday – Friday 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM  
Church: 873-4388 Parsonage: 873-4223  
revheller@westriv.com  
concordiasecretary@westriv.com  
Website: [www.concordiabeulah.org](http://www.concordiabeulah.org)

*Please use a pew card to record your worship and/or  
Communion attendance this morning*