

Friday – An Unusual Encounter

Read Genesis 14 and don't worry about pronouncing the names of the warring kings. Bottom line—Lot moved into Sodom with all of its wickedness. The war bears down on Sodom. Sodom falls, and Lot is taken captive. Abram faces yet another problem with his “irregular” nephew. What to do? Abram does not give up on Lot, rather like God does not give up on us or on the “irregulars” in our prayers. Abram organizes a rescue party and saves Lot, even Lot's goods and everyone with him. Now meet King Melchizedek of Salem—a name to say and remember. God blesses Abram with this once-in-the-Bible encounter. Centuries later Paul would write in Hebrews 7: *This King Melchizedek of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him; and to him Abraham apportioned 'one tenth of everything.'* His name, in the first place means 'king of righteousness'; next he is also king of Salem, that is, 'king of peace' ... resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. Some theologians suggest that Melchizedek may have been a theophany of Christ. What matters is that once again, Lot is saved. We are reminded that there is blessing in getting involved in order to help others. Today pray for the wisdom and strength needed to do so.

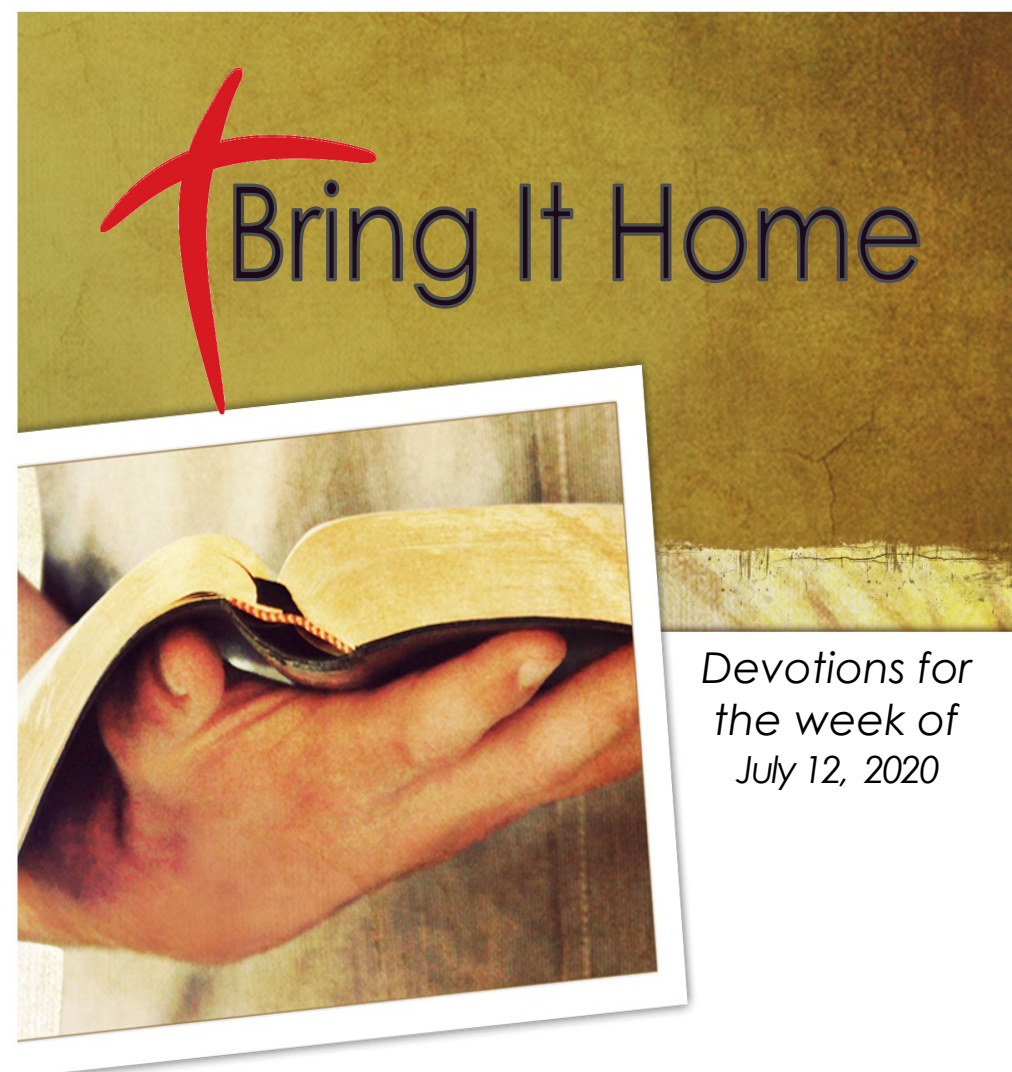
Saturday – God's Faithfulness

What a mess! With her biological clock expired, Sarai gets a culturally approved idea—her maid, Hagar, could have a baby for Abram. Abram likely looked at his aged wife and acknowledged that he wasn't getting any younger either. Hagar gives birth to Ishmael. Yet how many times is the seeming end of a problem only the beginning of a host of new ones? The troubles that began with the birth of Ishmael continue obliquely into our own times in the form of hostilities between Arabs and Jews. Hagar really had no choice in the matter, but Abram and Sarai did. Life is choice after choice. God hits the restart button—*Serve me and live a blameless life. I will make a covenant with you, by which I will make you into a mighty nation.* Abram has heard this before, of course. Have you noticed how our troubles have a way of opening our ears and minds to God? Abram's faith had been growing since he left Ur. Over and over he had seen God at work. He was ready to commit, including circumcision as a sign and an ongoing reminder of the covenant God made with Abram and with all His people. Names change to Abraham and Sarah. God promises that Sarah will have a son and that she will be the mother of nations. The message to us: *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.* Pr. 3:5-6

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This week's *Bring it Home* devotions were written by Eva Knight.
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Bring It Home

Devotions for
the week of
July 12, 2020

What Now?

As a child of Abraham through faith in Christ,

- Spend time this week in God's Word listening to what He is saying to you – what is He calling you to do, in big or small ways? Then act on that.
- Think about some of God's promises in His Word that are meaningful for you. Take time this week to reflect on those promises and why they are important to you.

Monday – IBM

We sat in a circle, heads bowed and hands folded. Carolyn sighed a prayer I have never forgotten. “My husband works for IBM. IBM stands for ‘I Been Moved.’ I don’t want to. Help me.” Suddenly her pain was our pain. We would miss her terribly. Now read Genesis 12:1-3. God instructs Abram to pack up, leave everything he has known, and move to an unknown destination. Did Abram *have* to go? God “sweetened the deal” with amazing promises; but Abram did not *have* to go. God gives us free will. Abram *chose* to go. Following God is a choice. (Carolyn moved, of course.) IBM moments come to us all, sometimes with a U-Haul; sometimes with instructions to move our thinking or reexamine it. Recently it has been hard to watch TV news. Pandemic. Mayhem. What would Jesus do? What are we to do? Let’s start where Abram did—Choose to follow God’s commands. Think 10 Commandments and Golden Rule. Next, be prepared for new directions. The going may get tough, but be of good courage—the “sweetener” for believers is eternal life in Christ. Read Psalm 37 for encouragement: *Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him, and He will help you.*

Tuesday – God Connections

One summer Sunday back in the days when we shook hands in church, a couple from New Hampshire introduced themselves. We chatted briefly about their family who had moved to the area recently and exchanged a bit of information. Months passed and then, surprise, a Christmas card! Lives touch for a reason, even if the reason is as simple as to remind us to be and stay connected to God and one another. After driving across the country, this couple sought out a place to worship, a place to connect with God. In the process they connected with me, and our Christmas cards continue. Now read today’s Bible verses. At age 75 Abram has gathered kith, kin, and herds. He has journeyed from wicked Ur along the Euphrates River to Haran, and finally into Canaan. God tells Abram that Canaan is to be his. Abram’s response? Build an altar. Worship God. Remember God’s promises and protection. Worship connects us to God. Words of Lutheran liturgy come to mind—“It is truly meet, right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to thee, O God.” Staying connected in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic has been challenging. Today, thank God for the creative ways we have to worship safely at Immanuel. Now, a challenge—call or email a church friend today. Connect.

Wednesday – Fears and Lies

You can’t make this stuff up! This story has elements of a soap opera plot. Our hero, Abram, hits hard times—famine. Good news—there’s food in Egypt. Here’s the catch—Sarai is beautiful. Abram figures that Pharaoh would kill him to get her, so why not offer a bit of a lie? Abram instructs Sarai to say that she is Abram’s sister. Knock out gorgeous, she is taken into the palace; and all goes well for Abram. Until, by the Lord’s hand, everyone in the palace gets sick and then someone spills the beans. Sarai is not Abram’s sister. She is his wife. Pharaoh is furious. He ousts Abram, Sarai, and everything connected with them. They not only live to tell the story but leave with a huge accumulation of goods and flocks. It’s a story built on a lie that grew out of Abram’s fear—fear of starvation, fear of being killed, fear that God was not able to protect him. Abram has “feet of clay.” In fact, many of our Bible heroes do. Yet, God loves and cares for them, as He does for us. Do we have fear issues or trust issues? Might they be two sides of a coin? From Psalm 34: *I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me, freeing me from all my fears. . . Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who trust in him!*

Thursday – Irregular People

Got an “irregular person” in your life? Most of us have one, often a family member. We love them and pray for them, but somehow they usually create tension. Lot qualifies as an irregular person in Abram’s life. He was Abram’s nephew, part of the family that journeyed from Ur. Lot prospered, perhaps helped by advice from his uncle. Yet, success caused problems for both Lot and Abram—not enough pasture. Their herders began fighting, upping the stress. What to do? Abram provides an example of how to deal with family tension. Valuing family relationships, he proposes a fair solution. Then he goes the extra mile by giving Lot first choice. Did it cost Abram? Yes. Abram doubtless imagined that Lot would take the greedy option. “Irregular” people tend toward self-centered behavior. Lot did. In addition to choosing the best land, Lot’s choice provided proximity to sinful Sodom. (Stay tuned—more trouble on the horizon.) Nonetheless, Abram preserved family relationships. Crisis averted and Lot gone, Abram is blessed by God. God repeats His promises to Abram. Abram builds an altar in gratitude. Today pray for your family, especially “irregular” members. *How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity. (Psalm 133)*