



## God is Unsettling – Touchpoint for March 1, 2023

**Genesis 12:1-4a (NRSVUE)** 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.

*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 the one who curses 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.*

### **Grace and peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.**

*"Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house ... and I will bless you ... so that you will be a blessing.'"*

This is one of those bible passages that summarizes the life of faith for me as well or better than any others. And there are two parts to it that have become my north stars, as it were. Or two parts that operate as cornerstones, if I may mix my metaphors.

The first part is this:

*"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house..."*

GO!!!

The life of faith is a journey. There is a movement to it that sends one beyond one's comfort zone, one's bubble, one's certitude.

*"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house..."*

Go from your country... isn't that being unpatriotic?

Go from your family... isn't that betraying your history?

GO!!!

Early followers of Jesus referred to themselves as followers of "The Way," not as Christians nor as a part of something called Christianity. They didn't define themselves as part of a belief system, with doctrines and dogmas. No, they were people of "The Way."

Jesus also referred to himself as the "Way" or the "Path."

So both Jesus and his early followers saw themselves more as adherents to a WAY of living rather than a way of thinking or believing.

Now on one hand, this can be very exciting. But on another hand, very unsettling. Because to be on the 'way' means to be constantly in a state of flux, constantly changing. And that can be hard and difficult.

You see, I like it when things are settled down. In fact, that was one of the things that was often said to me when I was a child: "SETTLE DOWN."

It's what I said to my kids when they were young, and even now when they are older. "When are you going to settle down?" Of course, they could just as easily say it to me.

It's also what I say to others when I sense things getting out of control: "SETTLE DOWN!"

We think things are better when everything is "settled down."

But here is God, telling Abram and Sarai to "unsettle up," not to settle down. Get up, unsettle yourselves, and go and move. Leave your country and your family. Step outside your tribe mentality. Move beyond the bubble you've been living in. Leave your way to follow my WAY.

And I must confess, that is not how faith has often been presented to me. Faith has been equated with certitude, which is quite the oxymoron if you think about it. Doctrine and dogma have taught me to find assurances that keep me in a fixed state of mind. And one is accused of heresy when one steps outside of settled orthodoxy.

And as long as one lives within this settled orthodoxy, one will be blessed and experience blessing. One can settle into a life of certitude and comfort, and one can settle into a life of enjoying one's blessings.

Which brings me to my other touchpoint, north star, or cornerstone:

*"I will bless you ... so that you will be a blessing."*

I am not the end point of blessing. Being blessed is not the end goal of the journey of faith. BEING A BLESSING IS!

If the blessings in my life are like a river flowing to me, I am not to be a dam that stops them up and forms a collection basin for them to sit in, and for me to wallow in. I am to be a bridge under or through which these blessings flow... TO OTHERS.

My life is not the final stop, the end game. It's not all about me.

Think of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus speaks to those who are unsettled in their lives. Those who hunger and thirst. Those who mourn. Those who are persecuted.

And he calls them BLESSED.

But he doesn't stop there. His very next words are that these people are the SALT of the earth and the LIGHT of the world.

They have been blessed to be a blessing. Their being unsettled will be a blessing to others.

Like Abram and Sarai, these people are called to a journey of being a blessing.

And so this passage from Genesis both confronts and comforts me.

It confronts me by making me take a hard look at my faith life and what I am trying to get out of it. What do I see as the end game or goal?

Am I simply looking for a "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine"? Am I simply looking for an affirmation or confirmation of everything I have been taught or believe? An affirmation or confirmation that will allow me to settle in and settle down, convinced that I am right?

This passage forces me to take a hard look at my faith life and what I am trying to get out of it.

But on the other hand, this passage is a passage of comfort. Because life is, at times, an unsettling journey. There are hills and valleys, speed bumps and potholes. It certainly hasn't been a straight line and smooth surface the whole time. And yet, there has been tremendous blessing in it. When bubbles have been burst,

new worlds have opened up. Encountering different cultures and belief systems have expanded and blessed my understanding of who I am and whose I am.

And along the way, I have met many saints who have been a blessing in my life. People who spent less time counting their blessings, and more time sharing their blessings, being a blessing.

And their blessing to me came not from their settled beliefs, their self-assurance. No, it came from their unsettled-ness on the way, on the journey. Their blessing was in the sharing of their struggles and in their sharing of the One in whom they found hope. Sharing the One who is the Way and is with us on the Way.

Martin Luther once said, “The Gospel is one beggar telling another where to find food.”

My friend Henry Rojas has said a million times, “The Gospel is experienced when broken meets broken.”

And so this passage from Genesis brings not only confrontation and comfort, but fear and freedom.

There is fear in moving beyond my tribal boundaries of country and culture, family, and religious dogma. But there is a freedom in knowing that the God of Abram and Sarai is with us. And that being unsettled on the journey is not a sign of being disconnected or dis-membered from the Divine. It might actually be a blessing.

You see, the only people I know who are not unsettled on the journey of life are people who are dead. Not just physically, but spiritually and relationally. So set in THEIR WAYS, they have forgotten that they are people of THE WAY and a follower of the One who is the WAY.

No, being unsettled on the journey is not a sign of being disconnected or dis-membered from the Divine. It might actually result in blessing. Because now there is an openness to being a new creation, living in a new WAY, a WAY that brings a peace that passes the understanding that the tribes of country, family, and settled religion offer.

In the unsettling night in which Jesus was betrayed, He took bread and wine and gave it to a bunch of unsettled followers.

*“Take and eat. Take and drink. We will be membered, re-membered in these upcoming, unsettling days of life and death. But it is a journey, a WAY, that will bless others into resurrection and new life.”*

**Amen.**

## **Spirit in the Desert**

### **Opening Songs**

#### **Be Still**

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God

#### **Create in Me**

(The Concordia Choir)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence and take not the holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit.

### **Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

### **Touchpoint**

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

#### **See Him**

(Keith Duke)

**See him**: 1) silent and lifeless, 2) alone and forlorn, 3) broken and helpless...crowned with a garland of thorns, 4) as son and as brother, 5) related to all, 6) through the grief of a mother...hurting the most of all, 7) as healer and teacher, 8) as helper and friend, 9) as prophet and preacher...

Ignore Him? I doubt if you can.

### **The Meal**

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

(“Our Father,” Taizé Reflections)

### **Benediction**

#### **Gaelic Blessing/Deep Peace**

(John Rutter, The Cambridge Singers)

Deep peace of the running wave to you. Deep peace of the flowing air to you.  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you. Deep peace of the shining stars to you.  
Deep peace of the gentle night to you. Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.  
Deep peace of Christ, of Christ the light of the world to you.  
Deep peace of Christ to you.