**New Kilpatrick**

**Sunday 26th June 2022**

**Genesis 12:1-9**

**Podcast**

**Gathering**

When holiday flights are cancelled

And rail strikes stop what we are doing

And the cost of living limits our horizons

And our future feels uncertain

When we don’t know where we are going

This is the very time to set out faithfully

To choose to shape the future

Rather than be shaped by it

It is a matter of faith

And faithfully we tell our tales

Of the first ones, like Abraham

Still travelling under 4000 year old skies

And invites us to add our footprints

To the trail of faith unfolding

And the future still yet to be

**Welcome**

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish… and together we join the bigger invitation to travel… inwardly… spiritually… faithfully… even as we can’t go that far physically… but it is a longer journey with a greater distance, we take… as we begin the story of Abraham… and accompany him over the summer…

We begin from home… but find ourselves in unknown places… wilderness and wandering… among strangers who we make friends… under star-fields with unknown constellations… Shall we go?… Let’s step out one of the oldest faith journey humanity has known…

**Prayer**

Loving God

We meet you on the way

Under star maps

And through wilderness

Amid questions

And life long wisdom

In this moment

And in this place

We pause

Breathe a little

Be still for a moment

And find our bearings

Among the confusion of our politics

And the fear of conflict

In the joy of our relationships

And the pain of them too

In the hurt we feel

And the grief we experience

And today

Here

Now

We place them

Here

Now

Letting the love that is greater than all things

Hold

Forgive

Renew

Bless

And invite us into life

Once more

(Pause)

Loving God

May we linger here a while longer

Speak of hope

And share our fears

Create community

That we have companions now

With which to travel

Never on our own

But together shape a future

Blessed with hope

And a God who cannot let us go

Hear us as we share the global prayer

**Reading Intro**

We need to go back in time this week… as far back as we might be able to go… when stories were history and they grew in the telling… tales that evolved to shape a people and give them purpose and meaning and as sense of who they were…

This is beyond history… this is more honest than history… but goes to the core of our humanity… what is valuable to us… what serves us to be human… and resources our humanity…

The story of Abraham is one we will tell for the next couple of months over the summer… Abraham is a new start in the story of faith… Up to now… God has gone big… God has taken humanity as a whole… and tried to steer and guide it… It didn’t work… Babel, the immediately preceding tale illustrates that…

So God tries a new tact… and focusses way in on a single individual… in order to grow a new relationships with humanity… Abraham is the chosen one… a single individual… living comfortably in Ur… retiring soon… having lived a good life… living among and believing in the God’s of the Chaleans…

Out of this comes a voice… an invitation… and a new departure… which like many of the plane snap trains this week… has yet to arrive at a destination…

**Reading Genesis 12:1-9**

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. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother’s son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come 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 on 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 invoked the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed on by stages towards the Negeb.

**Reflection**

This is a bit of a confession… and it is stating the blindingly obvious… but it doesn’t always seem to have been obvious… that the faith texts we have been exploring over the last couple of years… are some of the most appropriate and life-giving for our time…

Well of course they are… That’s why we still have a church… just… because we folk of faith… find them to be clearly life-giving for our time… It is a tragedy we haven’t been able to offer these stories easily to guide national road maps and morals… for who we will become as a nation, and as a world, through conflict and leadership lacking in vision and the utter immorality of the gap between the richest and poorest…

Perhaps these faith stories are too familiar to some that they remain children’s stories… perhaps they are so unfamiliar to others that we have to begin again… and in both cases… the actual truth of these stories… is so counter-intuitive to our generation and the way we organise the world… that they would take some retelling before their truths make sense…

Take Abraham for example… this story we will be exploring over the summer… Abram is the founding figure of three major world faiths… Judaism… Islam and Christianity… He’s a great leader… a patriarch… a faith hero almost… but when you compare his character with much of the leadership we have today… we find he is the exact opposite of what we experience today…

Clearly many shape policies round a legacy… that their name will go down in history… they will be known as the one who did this that or the other from invading Ukraine to getting Brexit done…

This is why we need Abraham… he is the very opposite of how you would describe a hero… A hero is someone who is convinced of his or her own importance… but the bible doesn’t have many heroes like that… and those who are… fall hard…

Our faith doesn’t have heroes in the way Greeks and Roman have heroes… conscious of playing a part on the world stage…

Abraham is an non-hero… When you want to describe him… you don’t come up with many adjectives that speak of him in any traditional heroic ways… perhaps courage to set out on a faith journey… but beside that… you can only think of hospitable to strangers… anxious about his future… tenacious with a promise… He did what was right because it was right…

In fact… if you were to describe Abraham’s character… you’d find a whole bundle of words which most of US would happily aspire to…

That’s the heroic ideal in the bible… “heroism of the ordinary” as Jonathan Sacks says… It feels a radically new kind of heroism for us today… but is actually as old as the legends of Abraham himself… faithfulness… integrity… decency… humility…

A church… a community… a parish… renewed by the heroes of the ordinary each of us can be… living counter-intuitively in the world… telling our stories of faith and hope and kindness… amid all the noise of now…

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Creator

Thank you for this world

Not necessarily as it is now

But what it can be

Thank you for the hope that you have invested in creation

The grace that is part of our humanity

The morality that is woven into our futures

Yet for these things we need to pray

For those gifts are not the headlines today

So we pray for creation

An environment that is constantly changing and evolving

But changing now because of our lifestyles and desires

That come before the needs of others now and those yet to be born

A world heating beyond what we can survive

And so we pray for that journey the world is now on

We pray for our humanity

The cost of it for those who find themselves in conflict

Working for peace and justice and truth

In Ukraine, and centres of racism, and trade rules

And the worst of our humanity

Found in these same places but shaped by greed and arrogance and fear

So we pray for that journey the world is now on

We pray for our system of morals

And a way of government that seems to lessen their importance

Their value

Their guidance

And a nation confused and worried and uncertain of itself

And so we pray for that journey our nation is now on

And for each other

Our friends and family

Those who are unwell

Worried physically and mentally

Those limiting life because of the cost of living

And worry about others beyond ourselves

So poor in our world they hardly eat

Hardly have a penny

Hardly know if tomorrow will happen

Loving God

Hear us

And journey with us

This week and every week

Into every hopeful future

So be it

Amen

**Blessing**