

Into the Unknown: Part 1

The First Step

Genesis 12:1-4

I. WE

- A. 2020
 - 1. Almost a cliché now about how crazy it's been (Memes)
 - 2. It feels like every week something else happens...
- B. But for many of us this is how life felt even before the news got crazy.
 - 1. Health changes, relationships, jobs, finances, family, etc.
 - 2. Turmoil, chaos, crisis after crisis.
- C. And you know what, whenever Covid is over, when the election is over... life is still going to be life. And this reveals a hard truth...
 - 1. **Our future has always been and always will be unpredictable.**
 - 2. We are just aware of it on a larger scale now.
- D. It usually takes a crisis or a tragedy to force us to confront the true nature of life.
 - 1. And for some reason we are caught off guard, unprepared when things get crazy and start to get out of control.
- E. So what if we prepared now, in the middle of this crazy turmoil, for our unknown future?
 - 1. What if we could start building a foundation of peace and confidence that would stay with us into the unknown and hazy future?
 - 2. When crisis comes again... we'll have something to fall back on...
 - 3. That's what this series will help us do.
 - 4. Look at stories of people who walked courageously into the unknown and changed history.
 - 5. First step in this process today we'll discover... **Courage in the unknown is the result of a single choice.**

II. GOD

- A. Abraham- Father of 3 of the most influential faiths in the history of the world.
 - 1. Christianity, Islam, Judaism all trace roots back to him (religious symbols?)
- B. Lived in a world very different from ours... around 2000 BC in Ur (MAP)
 - 1. Constant danger, widespread & unpredictable disease, local warlords fighting for power, no modern convenience. (old movie clip with barbarians attacking?)
 - 2. Unpredictable life.
 - 3. Jewish scriptures give us the first look at him... starts as *Abram*.
- C. **V. 1. The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you.**
 - 1. Why did God choose Abram?
 - a. What had he done to earn this?
 - b. Nothing... he simply wanted to.
 - c. This shows us something really important about God- **God's care for us is not based on what we deserve.**
 - 2. Picture this... out of the blue God tells you to leave everything you've known and go to some unknown place.
 - a. Doesn't even tell him where... "I'll show you later."

- b. And Abram isn't some poor guy with nothing to lose.
 - c. Wife, extended family, servants, wealth, livestock. (pics)
 - d. If this all goes bad he is going to lose everything he's worked for his entire life (75 years old).
 - e. Ancient Mesopotamia (pics)... no social services, no retirement, no land of opportunity.
 - f. What would you be thinking?
 - g. Ever thought about just changing careers or cities? A lot of what if's
 - h. The thoughts that flood you when changes are forced on you?
 - i. I don't know if I can handle this, I don't know if this is the right thing, I don't know if I have what it'll take or if it's worth it.
 - j. It won't be the way I've wanted it to be... the way I've always planned/dreamed...
 - k. **Fear of the unknown future is actually fear of losing our imaginary control.**
3. Abram probably isn't too sure about this ... But check this out...

D. V. 2-3

I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

- 1. We often fear the unknown future because we think our future depends on us.
 - a. And if we're honest... we realize any future that is dependent on us probably isn't going to be that awesome.
 - b. Our knowledge of the future is not very strong. (fortune teller with crystal ball)
 - 2. But God says to Abram, "I'm going to handle everything."
 - a. I have a plan and I'm going to get you there.
 - b. This is going to be difficult, people will resist you, there will be problems, but I've got this.
 - c. Only thing we can count on for the future is that everything will change... nothing stays the same
 - d. All except one thing... God. Never changes... perfect love, power, control
 - e. **God doesn't call us into the unknown b/c he thinks we can handle it. He calls us b/c he knows he will handle it.**
 - 3. Did God give Abram all the details? NO
 - a. Told him just enough to take his first steps.
 - b. **God usually only gives us what we need to know in order to take that first step we need to take.**
- E. I want you to stop and think about something for a second. Abraham wasn't FORCED to go; he had a choice; this wasn't a done deal.
- 1. Stay where he is. Stay with what he knows
 - a. Keep the life he is used to, comfortable with, what he knows... where he has some sense of control... family, wealth, property... which would go away at some point.
 - 2. Or have the courage to trust God. Venture out into the unknown and see what God has planned. (Bilbo Baggins heading out of the shire?)
- F. Check this out- We have the same choice.
- 1. Try to hang on to what we think gives us control over our lives
 - a. Try to stay where it's comfortable / predictable / semi-controllable.
 - b. But it's a losing game.
 - c. **Life is going to change whether we accept it or not.**
 - d. We can try to delay it, keep heads in the sand and be of no use OR

2. We can accept that the future will always be unknown, but also accept that it doesn't depend on us.
3. WHY?
4. B/c there is a God who never changes. He loves us and he has a plan.
5. A plan that often doesn't make sense to us.
6. A plan that we can only see the next step of...
7. What did Abram choose?

G. V. 4

So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

1. Abram made the choice to trust God.
2. Religious word is faith.
3. Faith- often this mysterious, intangible, feeling we try to muster up. Not as mysterious as you might think.
4. It doesn't just magically or accidentally happen to you. Remember how I told you earlier that "courage in the face of the unknown is the result of a single choice"? You might be wondering "what choice is that"?

5. Faith is a choice to trust.

- a. Just like you are choosing to trust the chair you are sitting in, the car you drive in, that your next drink of water you have won't poison you, it's a choice.
6. Abram chose to trust God and God was good to his promises.
7. Great nation? Check
8. Bless you? Check
9. Famous? Check
10. Bless the whole world? Check (good **that's come out of faith traditions**) and check (**Jesus**).
11. It wasn't easy... don't want to gloss it over.
 - a. Almost died a few times
 - b. Was betrayed by family
 - c. Made major mistakes
 - d. The journey rarely made sense
 - e. He often had doubts
12. But none of that changed God's plans.
13. And in the end, b/c Abram chose to trust and the world was changed forever.

III. YOU

- A. Our lives will always be changing... the future is and always has been unknown.
 1. This isn't the first pandemic... it won't be the last. (**Plague pics, Flu pandemic pics**)
 2. There's going to be more wars. (**wars throughout history? Maybe that seen from Noah?**)
 3. This election craziness will happen again in four years. (**campaign bumper stickers from the last 40 years?**)
 4. Disease and sickness is not going to magically stop.
 5. Jobs are going to be lost
 6. Loved ones are going to leave us
 7. We have a choice... fight it and be dragged kicking and screaming... have reality come crashing down on us...
 8. Or choose now to trust and take a confident first step into the unknown.
 9. Corny... **I may not know what the future holds, but I know the One who holds the future.**

B. The first step in choosing to trust is PRAYER

1. Whether you think This is all wishful thinking... a way to blindly find comfort in a world that's out of our control...

- a. Just consider... what if there's more?
- b. Look back... how coincidences have happened that have led you to where you are?
- c. What things didn't make sense when you were in them but make sense looking back?
- d. Is it possible that it wasn't just dumb luck?
- e. **PRAYER- God, if you're real, show me and show me that I can trust you.**

2. Trust is at the core of Xianity. Believe in the Lord and you will be saved. **Acts 16:31**

3. Maybe you've made that choice...

- a. You trust him with your eternity with your sin.
- b. You trust that what he says is true.
- c. If you can trust him with your long-term eternal future what is stopping you from trusting him with your short-term immediate future? Your family's future? Your country's future?
- d. **PRAYER- God remind me that I can trust you. Thank you for how you have taken care of me so far.**

5. EVERYONE Read/memorize... Psalm 56:3-4

IV. WE

- A. The future is unknown, scary, dangerous, it will most likely kill you.
- B. But we can have peace and confidence even in the darkest moments...
 1. Not b/c we feel something...
 2. Not b/c we wish something...
 3. Not b/c we are ignorant or naive...
- C. But b/c we can choose to trust the God who promises to never leave us.
- D. I encourage you to make the choice of trust.
- E. The choice to trust takes the fear out of the unknown future.**
- F. Read **Psalm 56:3-4**
- G. **But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. I praise God for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?**

Lauren's Baptism

VIII. OUTRO

Questions

1. What was something that stuck with you from the account of Abram/Abraham and this week's message?
2. Read Hebrews 11:8-16, or all of Chapter 11 if you really want to dive in. What resonates with you here?
3. What concerns do you usually have about your unknown future? How can your group pray for you this week?