

### Do We Stay Where We Are in Life, Where Things Are Comfortable and Relatively Secure? Do We Play It Safe? Or Do We Take a Risk, Make a Change, and Step Out in Faith for Parts Unknown?

"Each of us, as we journey through life, eventually comes to a place where we are confronted with a colossal decision," the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his sermon Sunday. "The choice that confronts us in these moments is simply this: Do we stay where we are in life, where things are comfortable and relatively secure? Or do we take a risk, make a change, and step out in faith for parts unknown? . . . Or do we play it safe?"

"This was the challenge that confronted Abram in our Old Testament lesson from Genesis," Pastor Thelander said. "Three chapters earlier, God had presented Abram with a choice: Leave the security of your land and your family, pack your bags, and head for parts unknown. In return, God promised to bless the world through Abram's descendants.

"Abram weighed things out, and opted to launch out for parts unknown. As we pick up the story here in Genesis 15, Abram is having a crisis of faith. He is struggling to see how God's promise to bless the world through him will come about, because his wife Sarah is old and barren . . . Part of Abram, I suspect, wants to believe, but the bigger part of him is terrified, because he sees the situation *as it is*, with all the limits and obstacles that confront him."

"We all struggle at times to discern God's will and leading in our lives," he continued, "and once we do discern God's guidance and we step out in faith, our faith is soon challenged when all we can see with our human eyes is our limitations and the obstacles that confront us. Like Abram, it becomes hard for us to trust God for many things, when we cannot see the potential for *one*."

"Fortunately for Abram, God works the swing shift. . . . He says to him, 'Look at all those stars. Count what is countless. Now listen

to me. Your descendants will number more than those stars.'

"What a promise. What a moment. Abram sees the reality of what *is*, but God sees the limitless possibilities of what *can be*. . . . I don't know what happened with Abram as he stood under the canopy of that night sky. I don't know how long he lingered there. The text in its brevity only tells us what we need to know, which is this: *Abram believed God*. He believed God, and the consequences of that one decision subsequently altered the entire course of human history."

Pastor Thelander told of his decision at age 22 to leave family, familiar surroundings and Connie's employment (p. 2→)

"Moses before the Burning Bush", by Domenico Feti (1589-1623). © Web Gallery of Art. The O.T. lesson Sunday will tell of God's calling and promise to Moses and God's self-identification, all from the bush. Psalm 103 will say, "He made his ways known to Moses and his works to the children of Israel." 1 Cor. 10 will tell us that although the people "ate the same miraculous food" they rebelled and were put to death. We, too, eat miraculous food at the Lord's Table, but Luke 13 will tell us that is not enough without repentance, for which God in his mercy has given us yet this additional moment.



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Sunday	10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service	<b>We welcome donations for The Harbinger.</b>
	11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation	
	11:45 a.m.: Post-service discussion.	
	6:00 p.m., 4/1: Lenten Evensong, with no tea or refreshments.	

**Tuesdays 5:30 p.m. and Thursdays 7:00 p.m.: Lenten Evening Prayers**

**Thurs., 3/15, 7 p.m.: Psychological & Biblical Aspects of Forgiveness, NNU**

**Readings, 3/11:** Ex. 3:1-15; Ps. 103; 1 Cor. 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9. **3/18:** Josh. 4:19-24, 5:9-12; Ps. 34:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Luke 15:11-32.

**Prayer Emphases:** Belize; Charismatic Episcopal Church; Eagle Rock Baptist Church, Los Angeles, CA, and the Rev. Dr. Rick Mandl; The Navigators; parishioners on Winstead Place.

**(Sermon, cont'd.)** "to go to an unknown place and an unknown people", to enroll at Asbury Theological Seminary, where the cost was "five times what it would be if we stayed put." Just weeks into his first semester he had a crisis of confidence and questioned whether it was all a mistake, but in a class one morning "God invited me to look up into the night sky and count the stars. In that moment I knew with certainty that Connie and I had done what God had asked of us. The years that followed provided many challenges, but when those challenges came, the memory of that classroom experience sustained me." "Fortunately for us, as well as Abram, God still works the swing shift. As he was faithful to Abram, so he is faithful to us. He confirms his promises to us, and blesses our faith and obedience."