Genesis 15:1-12 & 17-18 – God seen in action

This morning we meet with Abraham. He had been obedient to God’s calling to leave all that he had and the place he lived to follow where God led him. At this point in scripture let us not forget that Abraham was a homeless man. He trusted completely in God for all his security and provision.

Abraham had just refused abundant generosity from the king of Sodom. This reflects his complete trust in God’s provision and not from other people. That refusal is a testament to God’s faithfulness to those who witnessed it.

Abraham still struggles with having no heir though. The fact that he, a homeless wanderer, wants an heir to whom he can leave his estate implies that he feels a certain level of security.

At the beginning of the passage we just read, God said “I am your shield, your very great reward”. He does not say that He will GIVE a shield or reward, but that I AM these things. God Himself; not what He gives to us, but the very person of God.

Ask yourself and ponder upon the question, do I accept God as my shield and very great reward, or do I confuse that with what He has provided for me?

When Abraham speaks to God of his disappointment of not having a son, we could mistake that for him grumbling, complaining, or disbelief. God had already made that promise to him.

It is in the response from God, where He says “from your own body” that perhaps we can be clearer about the way Abraham is speaking. God was not angry or impatient with him, just emphasized that His promise was still valid. A son could be adopted, but when God says emphatically “from your own body” implies that Abraham wanted confirmation and clarification – God’s response settled any doubt.

God promises Abraham descendants aplenty! More than the stars in the sky (at least 8,000 visible from where Abraham would have been). He also promises that the land will be given to them.

God requests a heifer, goat, ram, dove and pigeon. Abraham cuts them in two and lines them up, with a space between them, a corridor in effect. This was the way in which covenant promises were secured. The ritual would be that both parties would pass between the dismembered animals to invoke a like fate on themselves if they broke their pledge.

The smoking firepot that passed through was representative of God.

Please notice that Abraham was not required to pass through the corridor. He had to protect it from the birds of prey, but he did not have to walk through it. Is this another sign of grace?

We know what happens in the future, when Abraham tries to fulfil the promise in his own way, by impregnating Hagar, rather than trusting God’s promise that his heir would be through his wife, Sarah.

How long did it take before the promise of a son through Sarah came to fruition? 25 years! Even the most patient person may have doubt creep in with regard to waiting 25 years for a child. Physical age does have an impact on this too.

God did not require Abraham to participate in the covenant ritual – because of His grace. His knowledge that in human weakness Abraham, just like us, would have doubts and not be able to fulfil that pledge.

I am following the lectionary and there was also the choice of the passage in Luke 9: 28-36 which is the transfiguration: when the face of Jesus changed, His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning, and Moses and Elijah appeared in glorious splendour.

When Jesus was approaching His darkest time on earth, was He doubting? Was this event a reminder for Him, from our heavenly Father that the glory to which He was being called towards was real? Had Jesus begun to doubt what He knew? Was this His heavenly calling or was it a delusion of a man?

I do not know – but if Jesus was doubting, God met with Him and gave Him proof that the glory is real. If it was not for Jesus, then it gave Peter, John and James who were on the mountain too the proof and glimpse that life did not end with death, by seeing Moses and Elijah.

Yes, God’s grace is visible in all the books of the bible. All the way through we see God in action, not by making things perfect, but by being faithful in the midst of circumstances.

When our redemption was sealed by the death of Jesus on the cross, there was a severe earthquake. Not moonbeams and rainbows – but earthquake.

Our salvation is not without sacrifice, but it is God’s covenant promise for us. We did not have to walk through the dismemberment of death, it was only Jesus.

Like Abraham, the promise of God’s presence with us is still valid. He has shown His full commitment to that covenant that He will remain with us – we do not have to walk through the corridor of death on a cross, we have simply been given the choice whether we trust and follow Him, no matter what circumstances surround us, to life eternal with our heavenly Father.

God said “I am your shield, your very great reward”.