

Trinity 8



I don't know if it's because I have now passed the age of 50, but over the last few months Facebook has been inundating me with some very interesting adverts! For some reason the algorithm thinks that I now need to know all about, how to get rid of varicose veins and toenail fungus and how to lose weight! The adverts have contained some pretty impressive promises, but, call me cynical, I'm not sure these are promises that I can 100% count on. In fact, the world is full of broken promises and false promises. We'll all have encountered them. From politicians, from telephone salesmen, even perhaps from friends and family, not all promises can be trusted. Well today's readings are all about promises and these are promises that we can have absolute total confidence in.

Almost sold out
Last H-Varicose Veins Formula Left

89%

before

★★★★★ Over 10,000 reviews

In today's Old Testament reading, we overhear a conversation between God and Abram, but this is not the first conversation they have had. 3 chapters before, God gives Abram an amazing promise:

'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.' (Genesis 12:2)

A chapter later, God promises Abram again that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16).

But in today's reading Abraham and Sarah are still childless, God has made a gracious promise, but God seems to be doing nothing! Abraham and Sarah are getting older, and time is running out. Abram is getting desperate and so he challenges God. God replies, 'Do not be afraid

Abram.' This is the first time, God uses these words in the Bible, 'Do not be afraid.' God promises protection and he confirms his promise to Abram, this time using the stars to show just how many descendants he will have. Abram recognizes the utter impossibility of what God is promising. He's around 100 and Sarah his wife is 90 and yet Abraham has faith, he believes that God is able to accomplish anything, even the impossible. And, in time, his faith proves well founded. Abram only asks for an heir, one son, to inherit his possessions, but God's promise is way beyond that. God provides offspring as numerous as the stars. Abram becomes the father of many nations.

Now does anyone remember the big word I talked about in my sermon 2 weeks ago? - The Immutability of God. We talked about the Christian understanding of God as unchanging. God is unchanging in his character, his will, his promises. When God makes a promise, he really means it. God's promises are absolutely unbreakable. In 2 Corinthians 1:20, Paul writes that, in Jesus, every one of God's promises is a 'Yes and Amen.' From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is full of God's promises and he is faithful to every one of them.

Abram's story is set about 4000 years ago and yet we still live under the promises of God. If we look at today's Gospel reading, we find at least 2 of them. Notice, the first, begins, just as God's promise to Abram, 'Do not be afraid' (Luke 12:32), and then the promise, 'Your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom'. Notice Jesus speaks in the past tense, the promise is assured. God's kingdom is ours. It's a done deal. The second promise? Jesus is coming back. We don't know when, but it is God's promise, it's a done deal.

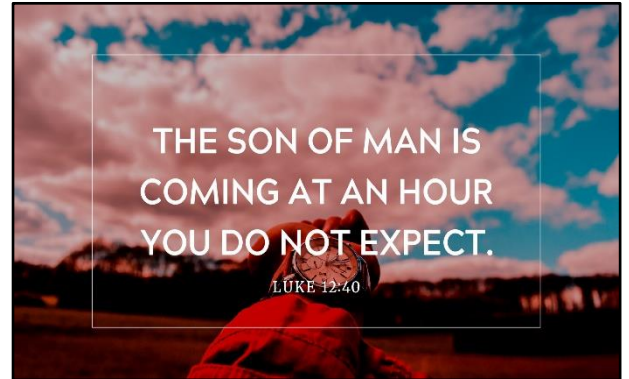
Of course, if we look through the New Testament, there are many, many other promises, that, as Christians, we live under. Promises that are way more than we could ever ask. Promises of God's presence with us, 'I am with you always, even to the end of the world' (Matthew 28:20). Promises of God's provision. We were looking at those a couple of weeks ago, 'Ask and it shall be given to you' (Matthew 7:7). We have promises

of God's forgiveness, 'If we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9). We have promises of God's empowering, through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

God has given us many amazing promises. So what does it mean for us to live our lives as Christians under those promises? Just like Abraham, it is by our faith alone that we enter into those promises.

We read that Abraham believed God, which is literally, "Abraham said, 'Amen, God!'" The Hebrew word translated "believed" means "to lean your whole weight upon." Abraham leaned completely on God and his promises. As Christians we can live lives of faith, trusting in God, trusting in God's promises and leaning our whole weight upon them. And that can change everything.

- Whatever life throws at us, we remember that we belong to God, who is faithful, who will never let us down. We are God's children, loved and cherished. We are citizens of God.
- Whatever life throws at us, we keep our eyes on the prize. Like those Old Testament heroes in Hebrews, we look towards a better country, a heavenly one. We remember that our treasure is in heaven. We run our race, however long or short, with our eyes fixed on Jesus, and our heavenly home.
- Whatever life throws at us, we remember that this is not the end. Jesus is coming back and we must live our lives with our lamps lit, ready for his return.



Of course, we may not see all God's promises come to fulfilment in this lifetime. As it says in Hebrews, many past heroes have, 'died in faith not having received the promises, but saw and greeted them from afar' (Hebrews 11:13). Like them, we live our life in the light and hope of those promises. However long it takes, however impossible it may seem, the promise of God guarantees the reality of our hope.

God is our shield and our reward, God is our protection and our provision, God is faithful and he will accomplish it.

'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.'

Revd Ros Wilshire