

2nd Sunday of Lent 5<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Genesis 12 1-4a, John 3 1-17 Roman 4 1-5, 13-17

*Teach us your ways O Lord and we will walk in your truth*

Abraham had already travelled a great distance by the time we get to our passage today. He was born in Ur the capital of Mesopotamia; we know it as Iraq. He had married his beautiful wife Sarah who couldn't have children. He had a brother Haran and a nephew Lot. After Haran had died, Abraham, Sarah, Lot and Abraham's elderly father Terah set out and travelled through what we know as the Fertile Crescent which stretches from the Persian gulf to the Mediterranean. This was a huge journey of over 700 miles through Babylon and Nineveh before they settled in Harran where Abraham's father died at the great age of 205 years. You would think after this massive undertaking of a journey they were ready to stand still and settled. Our passage tells us this was not the case and at the age of 75, Abraham and Sarah set off on another long journey down the banks of the Jordan to Canaan – modern day Israel. And there more seemingly impossible things happen. Why! because Abraham at the age of 75 answered God's call to step out on a new journey to a new land.

He steps out in faith, because he has no idea what that journey will be like or what dangers or difficulties lies ahead, the only reason for going anywhere is because of what God had said. *“Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you, I will make 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”*

Abraham takes the risks and yes makes mistakes on the way. God doesn't expect us to be perfect on the journey he just wants us to go with him.

We might be scared of taking new steps or trying new things after being in lockdown and it is understandable some don't want to move from their comfort zone they are in at present.

But, sometimes we have to take the right risks for the right reasons otherwise we would never move forward or learn new things or develop new relationships.

John reports that Nicodemus came to speak with Jesus at night. Many have speculated that Nicodemus was afraid or ashamed to visit Jesus in broad daylight, so he made a night-time visit. This may very well be the case, but the text does not give a reason for the timing of the visit. Several other reasons are also possible. Nicodemus questioned Jesus. As a member of the Jewish ruling council, it would have been his responsibility to find out about any teachers or other public figures who might lead the people astray.

There is this secret conversation with Jesus. Nicodemus concedes that God must have sent Jesus because of all the miraculous signs he performed. Jesus gets to the heart of the matter by responding with firm truth: *"...no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again"*. Nicodemus asks how anyone can be born again. I sense a frustration in Jesus because Nicodemus hasn't quite grasped the concept and when Jesus answers using a reference from the Old Testament, he is aware the Pharisee would have heard it before.

*"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him"*.

This is our hope today and the hope for the future because John writes later.

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

Later, Nicodemus reveals himself as a believer when he comes with Joseph of Arimathea to prepare Jesus's body for a proper Jewish burial.

There is a bit of Nicodemus in us, wondering how to make sense of things, especially if it is in our spiritual life. We need others to talk it through with or listen to other's views to be able to make things clear for us to know which path we are to take. But we need also to be like Abraham and to go out in faith to where God is asking us to go. We have the hindsight of knowing Jesus came to give us eternal life that he is our light that leads us forward. TS Elliot said, 'only those who risk going far can possibly find out how far one can go'.

So, are we ready to journey with the Spirit, wherever it blows us? Amen