**Pastor Lloyd’s Sermon notes for 13th March 2022**

**WHAT DO YOU SEE? #7 - ABRAHAM – A FUTURE THAT MOTIVATES ME!**

I like reading whodunits! And there are three questions a good investigator asks when trying to solve a murder….do you know what they are? The motive, the means, and the opportunity. This morning I want to speak about the first – the motive. What is it that really motivates you? It’s a question that psychologists ask as they try to understand a person’s choices and behaviours. To understand that you will need to pull back and look at some of your choices and behaviours and examine them. You will need to become a bit analytical about why you do what you do, why you say what you say, and why you spend time on what you do.

Many of us don’t really want to examine these murky depths of our lives because we might be afraid of what we might discover. We live in a kind of flat world, in the days where sailors thought you fell off the edge of the map if you sailed too far – ‘there be dragons here’! - was written on the map edge. You will need to essentially enquire of yourself – What do you value the most? What is it that really stirs you? And when you answer that question you will discover what really motivates you.

Before we do anything – because *we are thinking and choosing beings* we have this thinking and choosing skill inside us that operates – it is fed by what we value. A person who is self-centred and narcissistic is motivated by **pleasure** or pleasing themselves, that is what they value, and anyone else who stands in the way of that will threaten their wellbeing. Other people are motivated by **power** and control or status – these are people who have territory that they patrol, and you know when you have breached their turf because they bite! Still, others are motivated by **family** and relationships, they prize them above all and will do anything to feed and care for those they love. If they lose relationship or intimacy then their world crumbles. And of course many people are motivated by **money** or wealth. Yes, we all operate from deep drives and desires that motivate us.

So what would someone look like who was motivated by a world beyond this? Is it even possible in this day and age to live life here and now but be motivated by something over the horizon that they don’t fully see or experience? Can that kind of motivation be sustained? I think the key is to see what motivated Abraham and Hebrews 11 has the answer.

*By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.* Hebrews 11:8-10 (NIV)

There are three things I want to remind you about today that is the essential message of these two verses. Abraham’s faith was:

1. **A Faith that obeyed**

We read something like this and go….well that’s good for Abraham…but that’s not me. Someone had to go and start the Jewish nation, trek across lands to a destination he never knew of until one day God said…stop you’re here! It says, by faith he lived in a foreign land in a tent for he was looking for something – a city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God. Here is Abram’s motivation – this is what inspired his life, he knew this place was not his real home and his eyes were always looking heavenward, over the horizon. Abram spent most of his life wandering around in a tent. He never purchased a choice piece of land to build a residence and settle down. He never went back to where he came from, because he was motivated by something out of this world. He was looking for a city whose maker is God.

Two things marked Abraham’s life – his *tent and his altar*. His tent spoke of his temporary shelter in this life and his altar spoke of his devotion to God. Abraham was not perfect, there were plenty of blemishes in his life story well recorded for us; lying, deception, and fear all accompanied him on his journey. But he had this desire to keep looking over the horizon for what God was building and making. He just kept obeying what God asked him to do.

2. **A faith that embraced the future** **without full knowledge of what that might be.**

That starts without having to see the endgame. We too seek a city which is to come, Hebrews 13:14-16. We are called to embrace a future and persevere through difficult times, through times of perplexity and even doubt. You see here the real issue, can you keep believing when you don’t see the results you desire? Can you keep believing when circumstances are against you? Can you persevere through when others are giving up around you? There are times in all our lives where we just feel like we have had enough….it is just too hard. People we trusted have let us down or formed opinions about us that are untrue. There is any number of reasons to pull back from the front line. What does it take to stop you? Will you give to other people around you the power to wreck what God has motivated you to give your life for?

David Attenborough a few nights ago showed one of his amazing documentaries on how trees flourish in the desert. Where you would think nothing will survive through lack of water there is a tree that is able to because it networks a root system of life support beneath the sand. These trees live by providing sustenance for each other underground. It reminded me of how we are designed to support each other through dry and difficult times. You’re never meant to go it alone. You need your Church family more than ever. There are so many ‘one anothers’ in the Bible…..pray for, exhort, forgive, stir up, to love, and good works….that your underground network is urging you to embrace and persevere. And that’s the kind of faith that will last the distance.

3. **A faith that knows where real home is**

Where the long game is played.

Our citizenship is in Heaven – Philippians 3:17-21. And because of this the way to live our lives and our behaviour needs to reflect who we belong to. We *belong* to another World…another country with different values to this world. Not so different to Abraham after all are we?

We are aliens and strangers – writes Peter to the scattered believers - 1 Peter 2:9-11. Peter must have been reading about Abraham because he uses exactly the same type of expressions. He says that because this is not our real home we should live like a *pilgrim* here and model life of another world before people so they can see the truth about Jesus.

So what did Abraham see? – He saw a future which motivated him

*To obey the Word of the Lord in his life…. Are you doing that?*

*To embrace the uncertainty without knowing what it was and to persevere…Is this you? To remember where his permanent home was…. Do you live this way?*

Where do you go, to be re-inspired, energised and focussed? To the cross of Jesus Christ…. There is something about that which conquers our hearts and wins them over and woos them back to the Father. The Apostle Paul said – I have counted all other things as refuse for the sake of gaining Christ. I have chosen to keep my feet free from the entanglements of other causes. I have examined, exchanged and now experience life lived here and now for a cause which is yet to come. That’s what motivates me!