

Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

15:2 But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

15:3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

15:4 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."

15:5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

15:6 And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

15:7 Then He said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."

15:8 And he said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"

15:9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

15:10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.

15:11 And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

15:12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.

15:13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.

15:14 "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

15:15 "Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.

15:16 "But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

15:17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

15:18 On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates-

15:19 "the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites,

15:20 "the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim,

15:21 "the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

From today's sermon.

Go thou ... into the land that I will show thee, and I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great. I will make you a great nation, I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a source of blessing. I will bless them that bless thee, and I will bless them that curse thee. All the nations of the earth will be blessed by you." With God's words, Abram made a fresh start at the age of 75. He then entered Egypt to avoid famine, and there was an incident over his wife Sarai, and a drama of recapture by the surrounding kings in response to Lot's raid.

The Lord said, "Abram, do not be afraid; I am your shield. The reward you will receive will be great," but he had no son to inherit the reward.

The Lord God said, "Look up to the heavens and see the stars. If you can look up to the heavens and count the stars, count them... your descendants will be like that," recalls Zachariah in the Gospel of Luke.

'Abram believed in the Lord. And the Lord accepted this as his righteousness." The theme of righteousness by faith is already present here. The Bible tells us that Abram believed in the Lord, but he still asked for a sign. God even speaks of the Exodus more than 600 years later, showing salvation through redemption for his descendants. Truly, "the Lord is my shield.

Good morning, everyone.

We are now approaching the end of January. The cold weather has been a welcome relief these days. It looks like we will have mild weather with a high of two digits this week. I hope you will persevere for one more month, and when you hear the sound of March, you will be able to get through this winter.

Infectious diseases are raging along with the cold weather, so please take care of yourselves. Let us pray for each other as we move forward.

Now, we jumped a little from last week's Genesis 12 to chapter 15.

Abram, together with Sarai and Lot, flees to Egypt to escape the famine, where they see his wife is beautiful and the king approaches them. Abram says to Pharaoh, "I will not let you go to Egypt.

Pharaoh called Abram and said to him, "What have you done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was his wife?

12:19 Why did you say that she was my sister? I was going to take her to be my wife. Now your wife is here. Take her away.

Our image of Abraham should have been that he trusted God and went ahead without doubting the Lord's protection even in a situation where he might be in danger, but his opportunism, or perhaps calculation, or his attempt to get around by using his wives, makes us feel some familiarity with him. Like King David who forcibly took his subordinate's wife, I think that the book of the Bible is a book that makes us face the reality of people without hiding it. It is a book that makes us face the reality of human beings without hiding it.

After that, Abram and Lot decide to divide the land where they live, but Lot chooses a fertile land without hesitation in front of his uncle. This is the area around the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

13:13 The people of Sodom were wicked, and were gross sinners against the Lord.

We are too blind to see the dangers that lurk behind the good looks of our beautiful surroundings.

The Lord blesses Abram for willingly giving up his fertile land for pursuit. He builds an altar and goes on with his life in prayer, not dazzled by prosperity.

13:14 After Lot leaves Abram, the Lord says to Abram, "Lift up your eyes and look from where you are to the north, south, east, and west.

13:15 All the land which thou seest, I will give to thee and to thy seed for ever.

13:16 I will make your offspring as many as the dust of the earth. If a man can number the dust of the earth, let his descendants also be numbered.

13:17 Stand thou up, and go about the land in thy manes, and I will give it thee. I will give it to thee.

13:18 And Abram moved his tent, and dwelt by the terebinth-tree of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

(New Community Translation) 13:16 Make your offspring like grains of sand of the earth. 13:16 And thy seed shall be as the grains of sand of the earth: as the grains of sand of the earth are uncountable, so shall thy seed be uncountable.

13:16 And I will make your offspring like the sand of the earth, so that they will not be able to count them. As the grains of sand of the earth are uncountable, so will your descendants be uncountable," and today's verse echoes that,

And today's verse echoes this: "Look up to the heavens and count the stars, if you can count them. And it was said to him, "Your descendants will be like that." 15:5

I feel the scale of God's blessings. How many are the grains of sand of the earth? For us, it is a number that is far beyond our wisdom, and we cannot even imagine or measure it, but for God, who created each grain, He has no difficulty in counting them. He is the One who promised Abram a blessing.

The number of stars in the sky. We often speak of the vast number as an astronomical number, but it is as inexhaustible as the grains of sand of the earth. From the stars in the sky to the grains of sand on the earth. All of nature. Everything in the whole forest. Everything is in God's hands.

The city where Lot lives. And because it is a fertile place, there is a plundering frenzy by the surrounding kings, but here, with prayer, Abram, under brilliant command, pursues the plunderers fiercely and recovers all the property and families that were taken. It was a magnificent work.

15:1 After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, for I am your shield. Your reward will be great.

The voice of the Lord, who calls us by name and tells us, "Do not be afraid. We, too, hear the voice of the Lord in the Word today.

Many things happen to us. Insecurity, fear, calculation, danger, difficulty, oppression, crisis, betrayal, famine, plunder.... But to Abram, who built an altar and prayed, the Lord told him not to be afraid. I am your shield, the Lord told him. Our bodies are not left weak and bare before these difficulties. God is our shield. And He tells us that the reward you will receive is great.

2 Corinthians 6:2 God says, "I have heard your prayer in the time of grace, and I have saved you in the day of salvation. Behold, now is the time of grace; behold, now is the day of salvation.

6:3 Let us not in any thing cause a man to stumble, lest this ministry bring reproach upon us,

6:4 Instead, we present ourselves to men as servants of God in all circumstances. 6:4 Instead, we present ourselves to others as God's servants in every case, in extreme patience, in tribulation, in crisis, and in stalemate,

6:5 In flogging, in prison, in tumult, in toil, in all night long, and in famine,

6:6 With truth, knowledge, forbearance, charity, the Holy Spirit, and love without hypocrisy,  
6:7 By the word of truth, and by the power of God, and by the weapons of righteousness which he has on either side,

6:8 Whether praised or reviled, whether maligned or well-received, we present ourselves as servants of God. 6:9 We seem to deceive men, and yet we are truthful,

6:9 Though we seem to be unknown to men, yet we are known; though we seem to be dying, yet behold, we are alive; though we seem to be being chastised, yet we are not killed,

6:10 Though he seems to be grieved, yet he is ever glad; though he seems poor, yet he makes many rich; though he seems to have nothing, yet he has all things.

But Abram still had his troubles. He had been given many hard-earned assets, but he had no children to pass them on. They were only to be passed on to the children of his servants.

15:2 Abram said, "Lord God, what do You want to give me, when I have no son, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

15:3 And Abram said again, "Because thou hast given me no son, thou shalt be succeeded by a servant born in my house.

15:4 At this the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man should not be your successor. He who comes from your body should be your successor.

15:5 And the Lord brought him out and said to him, "Look up to heaven and count the stars, if you can. And He said to him, "Your descendants will be like that."

15:6 And Abram believed the LORD. And the LORD accepted it as his righteousness.

He said that he would increase his descendants to the number of the stars of heaven after the grains of sand. He believed God's words, regardless of his advanced age. It must have been like a faint expectation that what God said would happen in the future that he suddenly believed in his heart. Because of his heart that took to heart what God had spoken and believed it, God counted it as Abram's righteousness, his righteousness.

God has promised us countless blessings and protections, and He recognizes and counts the tiny, tiny sprouts of faith in our hearts that even the quickest, most sophisticated electron microscope can't see.

Like a parent who, in front of his or her child, asks the child if he or she can say "I'm sorry for what I did wrong" in a muffled voice while the child cries, God hears every word of the child's "I'm sorry," and encourages and praises the child, saying, "That's all right, you got it. Like a parent who encourages and praises his or her child, saying, "I'm sorry," and "Okay, that's all right, you got it. He really is like a caring father to his children, isn't He?

15:7 And the Lord said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of Chaldea to give you this land to inherit it.

15:8 And he said, "Lord God, how can you know that I will inherit it?

There was an intention behind this event of bringing him from the land of Ur to Canaan, and God had a plan of blessing in mind long, long ago. When we are preoccupied and pondering what will happen tomorrow and the day after, when the influence of the wicked approaches and besieges, when the plunderers approach, God has a great plan of salvation in store for us.

However, it is also our reality that we are weak, that at the second word, waves of trouble and unbelief come upon our hearts.

15:8 He said, "How can I know, O Lord God, that I will inherit it?

If you are Zachariah, shut up! This was a scene that God would have us reflect on. How can I know it by difficulty? I want a sign. I want a tangible assurance. I want assurance. I was praised for believing and being justified just a few moments ago, and now I'm not sure what to do. That is our reality. There is no one righteous. There is no one. How terrible is that reality for God?

Judges 21:25 In those days Israel had no king, so each one did what was right in his own eyes. Isaiah 53:6 We have all gone astray like sheep, each to his own way. Isaiah 53:6 And the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

15:9 And the LORD said unto him, Bring unto me a heifer of three years, and a goat of three years, and a ram of three years, and the babes, and the chicks of the goats.

15:10 And he brought them all and split them in two, and set the pieces facing each other. But he did not tear the birds.

15:11 When the rough bird landed on the carcass, Abram drove it away.

15:12 At sunset, when Abram was in a deep sleep, a great and dreadful darkness came upon him.

15:13 At that time the Lord said to Abram, "Take heed, my son, that your offspring will not be a traveler among other nations. 15:13 And the LORD said to Abram, "Take heed, my son, that thy seed become sojourners in other lands, and serve their people, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

15:14 But I will judge that nation whom they have served. Then they will come forth with

many possessions.

15:15 You will go in peace to your ancestors. And when they reach old age, they will be buried.

15:16 In the fourth generation they will return here. For the wickedness of the Amorites is not yet full.

15:17 And the day came, and it was dark, and a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch, passed between the clefts.

15:18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "I will give this land to your descendants. From the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates.

15:19 And the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites; 15:20 And the Hittites, and the Phethites, and the Pentateuchs, and the Kadmonites, and the Kadmonites,

15:20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaim

15:21 And the land of the Amorites, and of the Canaanites, and of the Gilgashites, and of the Jebusites.

Such a righteous people are taught from time to time of the Lord's mighty power. The salvation of the entire people by the struggling Joseph. But the many years of hardship that eventually comes later. But then, deliverance from it. The Lord God revealed things more than 600 years before the day He spoke to Abram, telling him of the certainty of God's promises and receiving the sacrifice in a supernatural way.

He also spoke of the certainty of God's promises and received a supernatural sacrifice, which had to be broken again because of man's unbelief. Here again we see a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ. The Lord provides the sacrifice, the Lord delivers from the land of slavery, and the Lord continues to lead His stubborn people.

Before our faithfulness, the Lord's truth shines forth. The truth of His love that never abandons us forever far surpasses our faith, and His mercy shines precious above all our deeds, even our sacrifices. So we can turn again and return to Him and believe in Him. Let us give thanks to the Lord.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for today's worship. Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for this day's worship. I am your shield. Thank you for your words, "Your reward will be very great. God has justified him for believing that a son would be given to him in his old age. But being justified does not mean that we have perfect faith and righteousness in ourselves. Thank you for God's redemption and forgiveness, which God uses as a shield to protect and save us. Bless our families and the people in our community. Use us. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.