

Finding Our Way Forward—Together

Spirit, open the eyes and ears of our hearts to see and hear your words to us today. Amen.

Please be seated.

A couple of years ago, a pair of bluebirds chose my nest box in which to make their home.

As spring unfolded, I kept an eye on things. I could hear them. I knew life was growing in there. But I couldn't see it.

Then one day, I came home to a commotion.

The parent birds were on the fence making a lot of noise! Fearing a bird disaster, like a cat or crow, I looked out. The mother bird, seeing me through the window, flew directly at me, clearly agitated.

I stepped back and then I noticed. One of the chicks was standing at the very edge of the nest box.

Both parents were calling.

The chick was calling back.

Everything familiar was literally behind it.

Everything ahead was unknown. The little bluebird seemed frozen between two instincts. One was telling it to stay where it was safe. The other was calling it toward the life it was made for. Finally, the little bird jumped.

And don't we find ourselves right in this place too?

We want the future, but we also want the familiarity of what we know.

We want the new thing God might be doing, but we would prefer to discover it without ever leaving the security of the nest.

We're standing between what has been and what comes next.

That is where today's reading finds Abraham's family as well.

Sarah has died. Abraham is aging and pondering the covenant.

Isaac—the child of promise, now an adult—has no wife, no family, no obvious future.

God's promises are still there, but the next chapter is unclear.

The future seems uncertain.

And into that uncertainty steps an unnamed servant who is tasked with finding a wife for Isaac.

What strikes me is that Abraham doesn't give his servant a detailed plan.

The servant is given responsibility.

And, he's given trust.

And he seeks to find the future.

That feels familiar.

Many of us are looking at our world and wondering what comes next.

We see political division.

Corruption.

Injustice.

Economic uncertainty.

Climate anxiety.

Violence.

Loneliness.

We care deeply...about our communities, our families, our neighbors, and the future. But the realities we see and experience are relentless.

And our situation often feels overwhelming.

We want to know the path forward.

We want guarantees for the future.

We want certainty that justice will prevail.

We want clarity about what to do.

Instead, we often find ourselves in unfamiliar places hoping and praying that the worst can be avoided and that the next step becomes visible—as soon as possible!!

Last week, Elizabeth made some powerful points that resonated and have stayed with me.

What disturbs us reveals our moral commitments.

Our outrage is a window into our loves.

What we cannot bear to see tells us what we believe is sacred.

Or to put it another way:

What breaks our hearts reveals what we love.

I have been thinking about that week.

What am I carrying grief about?

What am I angry about?

What keeps me awake at night?

Not because those feelings are pleasant (they're not), but because they are telling me something important.

They are revealing where I care most deeply.

They may be revealing where God's Spirit is already at work within me.

Sometimes our deepest calling comes hidden inside our deepest concern.

The things that trouble us most are often clues.

If we grieve cruelty, it is because we love compassion.

If we grieve injustice, it is because we love fairness.

If we grieve division, it is because we long for community.

What weighs on our hearts can reveal what we believe matters most. What we love helps us discern where God is calling us.

And that insight can help us understand what is happening in today's story.

Now back to the servant. He finds himself at a well and notice what he does.

He prays asking for guidance.

And then he pays attention.

The servant doesn't pray and wait for certainty to arrive.

He prays and stays at the well.

He prays and then watches.

He prays and then engages the world around him.

He notices who shows up.

He observes what kind of person Rebekah is.

The sign he asks for isn't beauty or status or wealth.

He pays attention to generosity.

To kindness.

To hospitality.

To character.

His discernment is rooted in values important to his household.

The future of Abraham's family is going to move forward through someone who sees a need and responds, someone who demonstrates her values with her actions.

The servant recognizes God's guidance because he knows what kind of future he is looking for.

And isn't the same true for us as well?

When we ask, "What should I do now?"

Rarely does the answer come through a dramatic revelation.

More often it comes through paying attention to what we value most deeply.

What kind of community are we trying to create?

What kind of neighbor do we want to be?

What kind of world do we hope to leave behind?

Those questions help us recognize the opportunities God places before us.

And then today's story arrives at its most remarkable moment. After listening to the servant's story, the family turns to Rebekah and asks:

"Will you go?"

It is a simple question. And it changes everything.

It is easy to miss how extraordinary this moment is because we know how the story ends.

But, Rebekah doesn't.

She has never met Isaac.

She has never seen the land she is being asked to call home.

The future exists only as a promise.

Yet the story pauses and places the decision in her hands.

"Will you go?"

It is a question that echoes throughout scripture.

Again and again, God invites ordinary people to step beyond what is familiar and trust what they cannot yet see.

And now Rebekah must decide whether she will become part of that story.

Her answer is only two words:

"I will."

Those are likely the most important words in the reading.

Not because she has certainty.

Not because she knows what lies ahead.

But because there are moments when faith is less about understanding and more about willingness.

The future unfolds because someone is willing to answer:

"I will."

The little bluebird eventually had to leave the nest.

The servant eventually had to begin the journey.

Rebekah eventually had to answer the question.

And we do too.

Not all at once.

Not by figuring out and trying to solve every problem on our own.

But through taking the next faithful step.

By saying, I will.

I will listen.

I will help.

I will advocate.

I will be kind.

I will care.

I will pay attention.

I will speak out.

I will begin.

And when enough people say those words together, something beautiful happens.

One person offers wisdom.

Another offers compassion.

Another offers courage.

Another offers time.

Another offers hope.

And alignment begins. We sometimes underestimate what God can do with ordinary faithfulness.

A conversation can become reconciliation.

A welcome can become belonging.

A meal can become community.

A small act of courage can give someone else permission to be courageous too.

Most of the transformations that shape our lives do not begin with enormous gestures.

They begin when someone quietly says, "I will."

The issues of the day are too complicated to force the future on our own. But when we become willing, suddenly what looked impossible for one person becomes something a community can carry together.

That is how God's future often arrives--through ordinary people paying attention. Trusting their values. Answering the call before them.

And saying:

"I will."

Many of us are tired.

I know I am.

Tired from caring.

Tired from worrying.

Tired from witnessing division and injustice.

Tired from trying to remain hopeful in a world that changes so quickly and seems to have lost its moral compass.

Frankly, I'm just tired of being tired.

But before we hear the call to be willing as one more demand, we need to hear another voice.

The voice of Jesus. And Jesus says...

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Perhaps the lightness of Christ's burden comes from knowing what is ours to carry and what is not. The future of the covenant was not Abraham's or the servant's or Rebekah's burden to carry alone. Their part was simply to answer, "I will". In the same way, God does not ask us to carry the burdens of tomorrow. God asks us to stay present today—with faith, with love, and with one another—and to be willing to take the next step that calls us into the unknown future.

Amen.