

Leading As a Servant
Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

As most psychotherapists or psychologists will tell you, dreams are often bizarre. You will even find dreams and dreamers in the Bible. From Abraham and Jacob to Pilot and Paul you will discover dreams and visions. More than a neurological bump in our brain's frontal lobes, dreams might be a God smack at our deeper levels.

What are dreams made of? Abraham is a centenarian who has experienced an interesting life. He has followed God's voice for the last decade. A voice that has promised that he will be the father of more people than can be counted. Uncle Abraham has listened to this voice and continued to believe in it.

His journey has taken him across deserts filled with heat and danger. And even though Abraham translated means 'exalted father,' he and his wife Sarah are childless. Again, God's voice speaks. Twice we are told that this voice comes '*as the sun was setting.*'

The voice instructs Abraham to sacrifice three animals and two birds. The ritual itself is weird: You cut the animals in half, nose to tail and place the halves on the ground. Then you arrange the halves so that there is a pathway between them. Then, uncle Abraham is anesthetized.

Then we are told that a dense and frightful darkness comes over him. The somber voice of the Spirit is heard. It is here that God creates a covenant with Abraham. As the animals are cut in two so God cuts a covenant with Abraham. In this murky moment as the sun is setting, he sees a smoking fire pot and a blazing light past through the animal pathway.

Then God's voice says, "*Abraham, this land will be your and your descendants land.*" The darkness lifts, the dream is gone, and the voice ceases.

What is the meaning of this dream for us? Could it be that we have an Abraham walking around inside of us? If so, what is it that God wants to say to each of us through this old dreamer?

Perhaps we get to the point in our lives when we realize that we have done the

best we could with our life. Abraham certainly did. Can you identify with him? We have been living with God for a while now, a decade or two, or three, or four and we have done the best with the hand that has been dealt us.

When we objectively examine our lives we believe that we have done the best we could with our family, God's church, our career, our friendships, and our health. Yet, like Abraham, and like Blaise Pascal who wrote, "*There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus*" we sometime feel alone.

Today we have reached that passage of personal pilgrimage when we have less time before us than behind us. What will we do now? Also like Abraham, we are anxious. Did you catch that the first words God spoke in our text were, "*Fear Not!*" Sometimes I think, "*That's easy for you to say, God!*"

If we are honest there are occasions when we fear our faith may not take us as far as our assets will. We worry that God might not show up in time when fear grips us. "*Fear Not! I am your shield and exceedingly great reward.*"

But the sun is going down and the night is coming. Do you know those silly Face Book quizzes? What color is your brain? Or, Do you think like a woman or a man? I was curious the other day so I took one. Nine questions. One question had to do with fear. The question asked was, which of the four situations scares you the most? It was not a difficult choice for me because the first choice was 'are afraid of the dark?

Darkness if more than physical. The saints and mystics of old called those spiritual experiences when fear and doubt assailed them dark nights of the soul. There will be times when, after we have done our best, we are uncertain if we have done that which is right and this causes us anxiety. This is the night.

And during these nights we long for God's dream, the dream that displays the truth that God always does what is best. Even when we have done the vilest thing God will always do the best thing. When we have given up on ourselves or on others God remains faithful.

When our lives are laid out before God and cut in two by wrong decisions, broken relationships, and ill-health, God arrives as fire and torch to walk among the sacrifices with gifts: promises, visions, and dreams.

Here is the Gospel of Jesus two thousand years before it actually happened. Today, just three days before Ash Wednesday and the beginning the Season of Lent, when we begin to think of the darkest of dark days, we recall that day at high noon when deep darkness fell as God in Jesus was nailed to a splintered tree. In those dark moments God strode among our death to reveal to us the way of love is the way of life.

When you sense uncle Abraham walking around inside of you, I am curious about what you will be dreaming. What are you going to do with those dreams? Could it be that God is trying to dream something new? Alleluia. Amen.