

Genesis 15: 1 – 6; Hebrews 11: 1 – 3, 8 – 16

'Faith Heroes or Role Models'

Introduction ...

Do you have a 'hero' or a 'role model ... someone who inspires you? someone you aspire to be like?

Nowadays we seem to talk more about role models than heroes ... perhaps because their example can be more local. So older pupils within schools are encouraged to be role models for the younger ones.

In any and every sphere of work – this kind of language is used too.

It's frequently referred to in sport ... and less in politics – which is interesting to ponder. But how about in terms of:

Faith and Discipleship ...

In some traditions and in some eras – the lives of the saints – or even the Martyrs have been read or recounted to give inspiration. At other times – the lives of great Missionaries have given the same encouragement.

But maybe for many of us today – it's primarily Biblical figures who feature for us.

That was true too of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews ... when trying to encourage the receivers of this letter to Faith and Faithfulness ... he directed them all the way back to Abraham.

So how might the account of Abraham's life and faith – so many centuries ago – speak into our lives today?

Abraham's response ...

I want to concentrate on just one aspect. This morning – we heard a short section from **Chapter 15 of the book of Genesis** ... in it there's the promise of a great number of descendants.

But that wasn't the first time God had made such a promise. Turn back a few Chapters to **Chapter 12 verse 2** – and God's words to Abraham are: **I will make of you a great nation.**

The verse before also gave Abraham a command:

**Go from your country and your kindred and your Father's house
to the land that I will show you.**

And he – Abraham – went, he obeyed. And things did not go smoothly, were not easy.

There was a famine ...

He lied to Pharaoh about his wife, Sarah – being his sister ...

Other Family tension with his nephew, Lot followed ...

And in Chapter 14 there was outright war.

And still – no sign of God’s promise of many descendants for Abraham even beginning to come true.

And we reach today’s passage: **Abraham saying to God ‘You have given me no offspring’** ... very direct and to the point.

God’s reply? To re-iterate his promise:

Your descendants will be as many as the stars ...

Then note how Abraham responds ... not with scepticism **“Promises ... promises ...”**

but with faith: **he believed the Lord.**

John Goldingay – an Old Testament scholar writes this:

Living by God’s promise regularly means living by a word that seems more than somewhat unlikely to be fulfilled.

And it’s Abraham’s willingness to believe – despite the lack of quick ‘evidence’ that can make him a good role model for us. Goldingay continues: **Living by a promise which we see fulfilled – but only in part is a constitutive feature of life with God. For us – the Messiah has come, the Spirit has been given, but the work of the Messiah is not completed, the Spirit is the foretaste of a new age – that is still future.**

But if we follow Abraham’s example this will not ‘faze’ us ... or undermine our Faith Promises yet to be completely fulfilled:

Jesus – the Prince of Peace ... Yet 2,000 years on the casualties of war continue ...

Yes ... but there has been progress and those who are committed disciples of Jesus work to bring peace and reconciliation and care for the victims of war. *Our faith in Jesus can be secure.*

Jesus – the Servant King ... Yet the Church itself – as well as society can be so concerned with status and position ...

Yes – but there is recognition that we are all both saint and sinner ... and prophetic voices always call the church to repent and reform. *Our faith in Jesus can be secure.*

Jesus: the Great Physician ... Yet illness persists –and can bring tragedy to young and old alike.

Yes – but the presence of Jesus within suffering brings consolation, hope and strength to face the future. *Our faith in Jesus can be secure.*

Conclusion ... And ultimately, for Christians ... and sometimes for others too ... in this regard as well as others our role model is Jesus himself. Amen.