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23 August 2020

Welcome and Notices

Amanda Fairs
viola

Call to Worship

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Hebrews 11:1-12

Great Texts of the Bible #2
In his own image

Prayers of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Benediction



NOTICES

23 August 2020

Wednesday 26 August 1.30 pm Covenanted Prayer Time
Sunday 30 August 11 am Great Texts of the Bible #4.

For your prayers this week:

With sadness we made known that **Norma Norris** and **May Russell** died last week. Please remember in your prayers **Ogilvie**, May's husband of 26 years, and the families of both May and Norma.

Congregational member: **Belinda MCCARTHY.**

and
Yousif & Vivian KUNDA who
minister with Global
Recording Networks now in
Ethiopia.



MEMBERS who wish to continue their freewill offerings may use the banking details at the bottom of this page or post to our Treasurer. Vic Ansell, 59 Queen St Kangaroo Flat Vic 3555.

GARDENIA ST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
53 Gardenia Street,
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BSB: 013-328. Account number: 2970 40694

GARDENIA ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BLACKBURN

23 August 2020

Waiting for the city which God had designed
and built, the city with permanent foundations

Hebrews 11:8-12



Old Treasury Building
Spring Street, Melbourne

WELCOME



The military committed serious human rights violations, including war crimes, in Kachin, Rakhine, and Shan States. The government made no progress in creating conditions conducive to the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of the 740,000 Rohingya women, men, and children who fled to Bangladesh beginning in August 2017. Rohingya who remained in Rakhine State lived under a system amounting to apartheid. Restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly continued. Authorities continued to arbitrarily arrest and detain human rights defenders and other peaceful activists. Impunity persisted for perpetrators of human rights violations and crimes under international law. Amnesty International 2019

Myanmar has responded defiantly to a ruling by the UN's top court ordering measures to prevent the genocide of Rohingya Muslims. The country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it presented a "distorted picture of the situation". Thousands of Rohingya died and more than 700,000 fled to Bangladesh during an army crackdown in 2017. The measures imposed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are binding and not subject to appeal. However the ICJ has no way of enforcing them. The case was lodged by the African Muslim majority nation of The Gambia. The ruling warned that genocidal actions could recur. BBC 23 January 2020

Buddhism is the dominant religion in Myanmar. Many Buddhist groups pressure minorities, including Christians, to leave the country as they aim to keep Myanmar 'pure'. Thousands of Christians have also been displaced due to civil war, with many living in camps where they are denied access to food and healthcare because of their faith. Churches are monitored, and extremists target church leaders in order to stop the church from growing. Christians usually meet in homes or business places because church land is often confiscated. Children of Christians face discrimination by teachers and bullying by other children. Open Doors 2019

Great Texts of the Bible #3 Hebrews 11:8-12

Sermon Notes

We are exploring great texts of the Bible; passages of Scripture that remind us why sixty six books written over a span of more than a 1000 years can be published as one book.

These may be favourite verses that we have memorised, but they might also be chunks of Scripture text that create the skeleton or sinews of the Bible.

Today we are looking at a passage of Hebrews that tells us about faith, and instances it from the life of Abraham in particular. Let's observe Abraham.

1 Stepping out in faith

Abraham grew up in a city that worshipped the moon. Perhaps you can imagine the scene: on the flatlands of southern Iraq the towering temple to the moon goddess dominates the ziggurat. Moonrise across the desert is stunning. Each month, large and colourful the great disc rises and slowly turns to silver. Captivating and powerful, yet Abram left it all behind. "I will be your God", said YHWH. He took what he had and set out on a journey. He trusted the unseen God who had spoken to him, and promised him a future elsewhere. Three things were promised: a land in which to settle, a son with descendants "as numerous as the stars", and that he would bring blessing to 'all the families of the earth' (Genesis 12:1-3).

Faith still involves leaving and charting a new course.

2 Stepping where in Faith?

But where? Abram didn't know where he was going. With all his goods and chattels he first journeyed up the Euphrates to Haran, a distance of roughly 1000 km.

Later he had to travel further, much further. The end of the journey was never in sight! Why would he do that? The answer has little to do with the length of the journey or the route, but everything to do with the One who had called to him.

Not that faith came easily to Abram. He struggled with failures of nerve and hope which jeopardised the promises.

This journey of trust with its promise of a son, dominates most of Genesis chapters 12-20. He struggled with faith, yet trusting the promise Abram, became Abraham (Genesis 17:5).

3 Faith steps with new values.

Abraham left his home to live as a foreigner in another land. How insecure might he have felt? Not only that, he left a city to live in tents. (Hebrews 11:9). Imagine the insecurity such a change might cause. Think refugees or loss of income.

We too have to face the challenge that God may call us to downward mobility as this world deems it. We may find ourselves spurned by the glitterati and the fashionistas.

The image I selected to go with our reflection today features the Old Treasury Building in Spring St Melbourne. Built to house the Treasury Department of Government it typifies something solid, enduring and secure. Yet it was established by the Gold Rush in Victoria (1858-62).

The blessing of Abraham included wealth, but it meant huge adjustment to his values. He was blessed with wealth (24:35), but his faith was in God.

4 Faith steps to an unseen city.

The call of God shaped not only the life and faith of Abraham but it left the world with the Covenant promise of blessing through the "promised seed".

So Abraham set forth knowing only the promises of God. He was confident that what he left behind could not be compared to the promise before him. He was "waiting for a city whose builder and architect was God" (Hebrews 11:10)

The blessing of the nations appears in the songs of Israel. Eg., Psalms 86:9 and 96:3. But Abraham and many succeeding generations did not see the fulfilment of the promise (Compare Matthew 1:1 with Hebrews 11:40).

The blessing of the nations "always imparted some sense of mission to Israel; yet it never became a programme of concerted action till the ascension." (Derek Kidner) The fulfilment came with Christ.

The holy city, the goal of our faith journey, is where God reigns and his will is done on earth as in heaven. May we each find ourselves drawn out in faith to the God who so desires to bless us, that at his indescribable cost, even our sins can be forgiven.