**Family Service Talk 14th July 2024**

**Genesis 13:1-13**

 ***Abram and Lot Separate***

***13 So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. 2Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.***

***3From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier 4and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the Lord.***

***5Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. 6But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. 7And quarrelling arose between Abram’s herders and Lot’s. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.***

***8So Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not have any quarrelling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. 9Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.”***

***10Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) 11So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: 12Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. 13Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.***

Decisions, decisions, decisions …. Life is full of decisions! Have you made any decisions yet today?

It is only 10am on a Sunday and already you have been faced with many choices! Some easy and straight forward – whether to get out of bed (!!) Others – what to wear today, what to have for breakfast - may feel slightly harder, but as long as you are covered and fed are not really important. Recently those of us who are 18 and over have had to decide who to vote for in the General Election and that maybe was a much harder decision.

I wonder how you go about making decisions – big ones and little ones? ….

I wonder what was the hardest decision you have ever had to make? ….

I imagine Gareth Southgate is faced with some tough decisions at this moment and certainly the political parties in America are facing huge decisions… So maybe this is a good time to think about how we make decisions and see how our passage today can help us to do so wisely.

As we heard, Abram and Lot are in a difficult situation and Abram knows something has to change. But before we look and see what they did, let’s just rewind the clock a little and see how they have got into this situation.

In the last Family Service, Adam and Eve had been told to leave the garden of Eden where they lived with God after they made a very wrong decision by disobeying God – never the right thing to do. Once outside, they built up their family and the population of the earth slowly increased. Sadly, however, the people continued to make wrong decisions and life became more and more sinful now they were not living with God.

Eventually God wiped them all out with a huge flood, only saving Noah and his family who did believe and trust in God and obey his (somewhat strange) command to build a huge ark in the middle of a dry land.

After the water had retreated, the population grew again…. But…. The humans wanted to be like God and so He scattered them all over the earth and confused their languages to make it really hard to work together.

Finally, about 2000 years before Jesus was born, God spoke to a man called Abram who was descended from Noah’s son, Seth, and He made some amazing promises. He told Abram to leave the country in which he was living (and most of his family and household) and go to the land God would show him. Once there, God would

* Make him into a great nation
* Bless him and make his name great
* Bless all other nations through him.

That was quite some decision for Abram to make – to trust God and go or stay where he was and feel safe among all his family and familiar things. And as we know, Abram trusted God and left his home just as God had told him, taking with him his father, his wife, Sarah and orphaned nephew – Lot. In Canaan God met with Abram confirming that this was the right place and, in fact, God would give this land to Abram for him and his descendants to live in and grow as a nation. What an amazing moment that must have been for Abram.

We might be overwhelmed with all this travelling but for Abram and his family that was just how life was as a nomadic tribe. You went where the water and good grazing was for your animals.

But the first thing Abram did in the land was to build an altar to God to remember God speaking to him there and then another one when they pitched their tent where he could pray and worship God. Sadly, there was then a famine in Canaan and so Abram and family moved to Egypt for a while where they became rich in animals and other possessions. But in time, they finally returned to Canaan and I am sure they would have been very much looking forward to finally being in the land God had chosen for them.

But, as so often happens when life becomes easier in material ways, the quarrelling started. Lot and Abram’s herdsmen both wanted the best ground or water source for their animals. And everyone started to fall out and argue. Abram realised that the quarrels could lead to a complete breakdown in relationships and so decided to take action before it was too late. It was so important to show unity to the local tribes and also, he was a peacemaker at heart and was saddened at the thought of falling out with his nephew. He had to do something to bring about reconciliation and after praying, he decided that the best solution was for Abram and Lot to go in different directions with their herds and households and settle well away from each other.

At that point Abram would have been within his rights as the older generation to send Lot to a grotty, rocky part of the land but instead he graciously gave Lot a free choice of where he would go, doing everything to maintain a good relationship with his nephew.

And so, Lot chose …. No thinking, no asking God, he just looked up and headed off towards the obvious green of the Jordan plain. Maybe he barely noticed the evil cities of Sodom and Gomorrah nearby and in fact pitched his tent near them. And if you read on from today’s passage you will discover quite how bad a decision Lot had made …. Several times Lot had to be rescued by Abram through God’s divine intervention.

Looking back over the way Abram behaved in this situation, we see a foretaste of what we will see in Jesus …. Jesus who came to bring peace and reconcile us sinful people to God; Jesus who suffered for us as he died to restore our relationship with God; Jesus who watches over us even today.

And what can **we** learn about decision-making from the way Abram and Lot behaved in this situation?

**Abram** prayed to God …. **Lot** did not …. *Do* ***we*** *pray to God before any decision?*

**Abram** put Lot first and gave up his own rights …. **Lot** put himself first …. *Do* ***we*** *put others first and potentially forgo what is rightfully ours?*

**Abram** was prepared to suffer for Lot’s sake …. **Lot** was only interested in having the best …. *Are* ***we*** *prepared to suffer for others?*

**Abram** knew the importance of being at peace …. **Lot** didn’t act for the common good or peace …. *Do* ***we*** *do all we can to live at peace with all people?*

**Abram** chose to live in God’s land – Canaan …. **Lot** chose to live near an evil place …. *Do* ***we*** *resist the temptation to embrace sinful things?*

**Abram** kept an eye on Lot …. **Lot** was not concerned with Abram …. *Do* ***we*** *keep an eye on others in our family / church?*

Let us pray today that God will guide our decision making in every way. Amen.