

Third Sunday after Pentecost

5th June 2005

Rob Lamerton's words on the readings (before Brian McKinlay spoke)

*Genesis 12: 1-9; Psalm 33: 1-12; Romans 4: 13-25; Matthew 9: 9-13; 18-26*

If you were in Abram's shoes (sandals)

What would you do? Would you go?

OR Would you rationalize the experience; weigh up the costs; consider the consequences ... the cost of housing and travel—changing schools for the children—and stay where you are.

As I pondered this, I thought of times in my life when I felt compelled to set off even though the whole journey seemed very open ended.

In 1968 at the age of twenty I moved from Adelaide to Canberra on my own. It was at times scary, uncertain and lonely, but I think it opened up my world and gave me new experiences and made me aware of God in ways I never expected not had ever experienced before.

I remember too setting off in 1973 from Canberra with a few stops in mind, but with the ultimate goal of discovering what God had for me to do. With my backpack and a little money I found my way half way round Australia and eventually at St John's College, Morpeth.

As I ponder Abram's journey, I wonder too about the world's refugees leaving home and family, sometimes WITH family, to escape oppression, famine, violence, whatever, for something new!

I am still amazed at the stories of people who come seeking asylum — the wrench of leaving for an uncertain future in an uncertain destination — risking life's savings in finding ways to travel in unsafe trucks and leaky boats etc. And while I believe in border control, I still think we could do better than detention centres as we did for hundreds of people from Kosovo.

Abram's journey reminds us of our own journeys in life and reminds us too that the journey of faith continues!

Like Abram, our response to God means new places as one act of faith leads to another faith in God's presence, protection and providence begins to grow! Faith leads to faith!

Paul in his letter to the Christians in Rome is arguing that faith has pre-eminence and NOT the written code of the law. He describes Abram's FAITH which made him righteous before God and NOT any obedience to the Law.

In the gospel, we hear of Matthew responding in faith to Jesus' call "Follow me" —even though the experts in the Jewish Law reckoned that Matthew and others were beyond God's reach. The law only made Matthew an outcast ó but his faith started him on a new journey.

Similarly too, the woman with the bleeding, and the dead girl, were both gone from God's reach ó according to Law — BUT the willingness of the woman and the great desire of the girl's father to seek help from Jesus revealed their faith.

In each of the stories, faith is about breaking free from the limitations we and others around us apply! Faith is about the journey of discovery with God and about God. That leads me to hand over to Brian who is to tell us about his journey of faith as we prepare to licence him as a Lay Minister.