Today as you know is Father’s Day. Even though it is not a festive day on our liturgical calendar, the role of the earthly fathers (that is with a lower-case “f”) has been well illustrated throughout the Bible. It has also been contrasted with the character of the Heavenly Father as well.

Over the years, we have also seen how the roles of fathers or other male figures in our lives have redefined. Personally, I even know a few stay-at-home dads who work at home AND take care of the domestic responsibilities including the children, while their spouse go out to “work”. As we can see, the roles of parenthood have somewhat redefined over the years and has become more and more socially acceptable these days. However, the paternal relationship remains steadfast as the pillar of our family dynamics and the core of our values.

If you remember, last week we spent time looking into the special mutual relationship between the members of the Holy Trinity – the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as the unique paternal relationship between the Heavenly Father and the Son. Jesus was the earthly agent sent by the Heavenly Father on a mission to carry out the Father’s will to His people.

Throughout the Bible, a number of notable father/son relationships have been identified such as the one between Isaac and his 12 sons or the one between the prodigal son and his father, just to name a few. All of these paternal relationships offer us a small glimpse of our human-to-human relationships, not only with our earthly fathers but with our Heavenly Father as well.

Our text today from the book of *Genesis* invites us to examine yet another Biblical father figure – Abraham, whose name as you know, was changed from Abram to Abraham after the birth of his son Isaac. Ironically his new name Abraham means “***Father of Many***” was given to him, when he found out that he was going to be a father at the advanced age of 100 and his wife, Sarah was around 90. They had been barren for years. Their biological clocks have been ticking for this elderly couple to carry on their legacy. Little did they know that this was part of God’s plan and a testament of faith for them.

Out of their desperation, Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hand by allowing Abram to conceive a son with one of Sarai’s servants. But as the saying goes, ***if you want to make God laugh, try making a plan*.** That was not exactly what God had in mind. God had other idea installed for both Abram and Sarai.

As it turned out it wasn’t God who had the last laugh, but Sarai, when she was announced that she was going to bear a child at her advanced age. How could this be? You’ve got to be kidding me, right?

Through this miracle birth, God demonstrated God’s faithfulness, promise, assuring them that “*nothing is impossible with God!”[[1]](#footnote-1)* Both Abraham and Sarah just had to embrace what was given to them and let God do what God does best, in accordance to God’s plan and timing.

Now, normally this is what we focus on whenever we come across this story of Abraham and Sarah. We tend to focus on the faithfulness of Abram and Sarai and of God.

However, on this go-around, as we re-read our text today, I was more intrigued by the encounter between the messengers and Abram than the actual promise of descendants. Through this encounter, what can we learn about the character of Abram, as a role model of faith but also as the head of a household, a husband, and soon-to-be “father of many.”

Instead of seeing Abram as a patriarchal authority and power, our passage today shows us more of the “domesticated” and “softer” side of Abram. When Abram was met by those three travelers/visitors who came bearing the revelation news of fertility from God, he greeted them with great excitement and enthusiasm. Abram showed those visitors **Hospitality** by offering them not only water to drink but inviting them to wash their feet after a long day of travel on the road. Most likely he also offered them a place to stay, considering the large estate that Abram owned at the time. What’s another tent for these visitors to stay overnight, right?

Abram offered to bake bread for them to eat. He went out and killed a calf that is “tender and good” for these visitors. Abram also demonstrated his **Grace** and **Humility** by referring himself as their servant, even though he was probably one of the wealthiest and most highly respected men during his time. Abram was a very **Generous** man. How he treated strangers and visitors clearly demonstrated the relationship he had with others, especially his servants, and other kinsmen. He demonstrated the level of faith and trust that he had with God, even though his future was still kind of up in the air and God’s promise to him was in jeopardy.

According to the Apostle Paul, God credited Abraham’s faith as his as his righteousness. Furthermore, **anyone who believes in the same faith as Abraham’s is also adopted into the household of God and share the same covenant with God. We are all, therefore, descendants of Abraham and heirs according to God’s promise made to Abraham**.[[2]](#footnote-2)

As you can see, **the concept of “descendancy” is beyond biological. Anyone who possess the same faith in God as Abraham’s shall become not only as Abraham’s children but as God’s children as well.** We have been adopted and engrafted into this family tree of God. Our paternal relationship with the Heavenly Father is no longer defined by who we belong to biologically, but instead by what we believe in.

Earlier this week, one of my high school friends posted his family genealogy and ancestry on his *Facebook* page. It was a very interesting post that shows what percentage of your ancestry, based on a sample DNA that is submitted. My friend was somewhat surprised by the result of his ancestry. He was 36% Italian, 24% Middle Eastern, 10% Asian, and the rest is a mix of North African descents. My friend did this totally out of his own curiosity about his own family heritage and ancestry. My friend has gone through quite a lot this past year with his dad’s passing, as he will be spending his first Father’s Day without his father this year.

But what about our own faith ancestry and our own spiritual DNA? How would those look like for us? How many of us can trace our faith ancestry? How far does it go? Some of us may be first generation Christian, or some may be 3rd, 4th or even 5th. What does that say about the legacy that God has planned for us, as well as for our generations to come?

As some of you know, I am a 5th generation Christian, thanks to my great-great-grandfather who was first introduced to the Christian faith by the British Methodist missionary who were sent to Hong Kong. My great-great-grandfather was the first to accept Christ in his family. The reason I knew this is because my great-great-grandfather was buried in a Christian cemetery in Hong Kong. The names of all of his children and grandchildren were etched onto his tombstone. And at the very bottom of one of his grandchildren was my grandfather from my mother’s side.

Although I never had the privilege of meeting my great-great-grandfather, I’ve gathered bits and pieces of stories about him through my grandfather and my mother. My great-great-grandfather was a beloved man among his peers because of his generosity and caring for others, especially those who have just arrived from the villages in mainland China to Hong Kong. He would open up his home to anyone who might need a place to stay…whether just overnight, temporarily or for an extend period of time. He would lend them money, offer them food and clothing, help them find jobs and housing, or whatever help folks might need to get their feet established in their new surroundings. My great-great-grandfather would be there, kind of like many of the early immigrant here in this country.

My great-great-grandfather was a generous man who not only shared his resources with others, but he also loved sharing his most prized resource as well – his faith in God. He would invite his friends and relatives to church or to join him for their bible studies at home. He became the founding members and active pillars of the Hong Kong Methodist Church at the turn of the century – 19th century that is.

In retrospect, I feel privilege and honor to be a part of my great-great-grandfather’s faith legacy. Who would’ve thought that because of this one man’s faith conversion, a village of non-believers would be saved and received the gospel of hope in their salvation. This truly was the fruit of the remarkable work of the Holy Spirit. More than a hundred years later, hundreds of his descendants who are now spread across the globe, are still carrying on his legacy of faith and continuing to plant seeds in the lives of others?

In the same way, as we re-read the Abraham and Sarah story today, we ought to ask ourselves - **what legacy are we being asked to pass along to the future generations? What efforts are we making, through our faith, in paving the way for the generations to come.**

As the legendary baseball great Jackie Robinson once said, “***A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives.****”* What impact do our lives have upon others right now? How would we want to be remembered by those who will come after us, when our earthly time here is completed?

By the virtue of our baptism, we have accepted this responsibility of planting seeds of our faith, and nurturing them in the lives of others. We do not necessarily have to be a mother or a father in order to make a difference in someone’s lives. Some of us might be an uncle or an aunt, big sister or big brother, adopted parents, a teacher, a coach, a community leader, or simply a person of influence and be a role model to others. **God has a calling upon each of us, to be an influence of someone else.** Whatever that calling may be, God will use us! And God will challenge us to make our faith known for generations to come.

Because of our common faith with Abraham, the same covenant that God has established to Abraham is now passed onto us today, **our descendants shall be as *numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore****.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

Friends, as we honor all of our fathers and father figures in our lives today, let us remember what our ultimate calling is, as Christ commissioned to his disciples and to us as well that we shall “*Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."[[4]](#footnote-4)*

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Luke 1:37* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Galatians 3:6-7, 29* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Genesis 22:17* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Matthew 28:19-20* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)