Last week, we journeyed with Jesus through the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. We saw how Jesus stood firm on his ground by resisting various forms of temptations in spite of his physical needs and human desires. Through Christ’s wilderness experience, we’ve come to realize how vulnerable we all can be, how we can easily fail and fallen short of God’s expectations. Ultimately our faithfulness and allegiance to our God are being tested. That has been Satan’s mission ever since the days of Adam and Eve, and it remains relevant to us today.

In the movie “***A Star is Born****”*, which received 8 Oscar nominations this year, even though it only won the “*Best Original Song”* award, a young and aspiring musician was discovered and rose to her stardom and fame with the help of her boyfriend who saw something in her that she didn’t in herself. Already an accomplished singer and song writer, the young singer’s boyfriend Jack seemingly had everything that one desires held a deep secret that only a few people knew. He was a heavily addicted with drug and alcohol that ultimately claimed his career and also robbed his relationships and purpose in life.

Although the movie does not intend to have any religious connotation, it does however make us ponder upon our ultimate purpose and goal in our lives…about the series of testing and temptations that we all must go through in our journey across the wilderness of life… money, fame, power, relationships among others. It is a story of **self-discovery** and **personal redemption** “in spite of” our personal **shortcomings, disappointments**, and **struggles** in life.

Just as we acknowledge, during this season of Lent, that we all have our own flaws and imperfections, and that’s OK and acceptable in God’s sight, because we are ALL created in God’s perfect image and within God’s perfect plan. God inspires us and challenges us to discover our own unique gifts and talents in order to serve God’s purpose for God’s people, and in God’s kingdom.

In the Old Testament passage that we read earlier from the book of Genesis, we came upon another “rock star” among the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Bible. Abraham’s faith was put to the test at the “young” age of 99, when God asked him to sacrifice his beloved son – Issac. Abram was a blessed man, as indicated by his longevity, but not only that, he also possessed a vast amount of lands, silver and gold, servants and cattle. He was probably one of the wealthiest men on earth at the time, kind of like Job. It may appear that Abram had it all. However, there was STILL something missing. He and his wife Sarai were barren and without any children. Like many of us, Abram felt insecure about his own future. What’s going to happen when he dies? What legacy would he leave behind? Who’s going to carry on the family’s estate for generations to come? I’m sure many of these questions crossed Abram’s mind as he and his wife Sarai contemplated about their future in their advanced age.

Abram and his wife, Sarai were not getting any younger and she was way past her biological child-bearing age. He was 99 and she was 89. Well, according to their custom, the next of kin would have been his most trusted servant – Eliezer. This was anxious time for Abram and his wife, as their faith in God were put to the ultimate test. They failed to demonstrate their faithfulness in the LORD when Sarai offered her servant Hager to bear a son with her husband, which they did.

The LORD appeared to Abram through a vision assuring him not to worry about his future and place their faith and trust in God’s hand. As a sign to his promise, the LORD asked Abram to look up towards the heaven and to begin counting the number of stars, for as far as he could see.The LORD said to Abram, ***“If you are able to count them, so shall your descendants be”***.

Our text this morning tells us that **Abram BELIEVED the LORD, and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.[[1]](#footnote-1)** It was Abram’s belief, attitude and trust in God, not his personal achievements that put him ultimately in a rightful relationship with God.

God reassured Abram and established this covenant with him and his descendants because of his faithfulness. From now on, he shall be called “Abraham”, which means “***Father of Many***.” Despite his questioning and even doubt concerning his future, Abraham kept his faith, as he gazed upon the stars, as sign of God’s promise made to him.

Come to think of it, if we were placed in the same situation as Abraham, would we have reacted the same way as he did? ***Would we have failed to place our trust upon God’s provision and acknowledge God’s timing?***

I think there are many lessons that we can learn through our story today as we journey alongside with Abraham in his quest for faith. It’s OK for us to ask God those hard questions of Why? When? and How Long? It is, however, NOT OK is if we ignore or leave God out of the loop, while demonstrating our lack of faith in God. Just as Jesus said to Peter as he was beckoning Peter to join him in the Sea of Galilee, “**Oh you of little faith, why are you so afraid**?”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Throughout this season of Lent, God is inviting us to stretch our human imagination, by taking on new leap of faith by gauzing upon the stars of our future, for as far as we could see, and even stars that are yet to be formed and upon our horizon. As one theologian puts it, *“****Abram’s faithfulness is a questioning faithfulness, a pleading with God for more: more information, more clarity, more courage, more commitment as we stumble along, trying to follow the steps God calls us to on our own journey of faith****.”[[3]](#footnote-3)*

In our New Testament reading, from his letter to the early church in Philippi, the Apostle Paul reminded us to anchor our faith and fix our eyes upon the heavenly things above and **NOT** on earthly things here below. **Our citizenship rests ultimately in heaven and not here on earth.** It is comforting and reassuring for us to know that even through our many earthly trials, challenges, and disappointments in life, we all have something that we can look forward to at the end.

Through Christ we’ve all been granted this “dual citizenship” status both in heaven and on earth. Our residency is just a temporary placement…for only a relatively short period of time compared to the eternity of God. We are reminded that our permanent home and our eternal bodies ultimately belong in heaven and with God and not here on earth.

Through this renewed covenant, God has vowed to walk alongside with us through the many hills and valleys, and wilderness of this earthly life, just as He did with Abraham and Sarah. We are all the beneficiary of this covenant today, as the apostle Paul wrote “*If we belong to Christ, then we are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.”[[4]](#footnote-4)*

Throughout this season of Lent, may we pursue our discipline by doing our share of soul searching by reflecting upon our personal faith journey with our God. **WHAT IS IT** that God wants from us right now at this stage of our life journey? **WHO ARE WE** out of the vastness of God’s creation, that God declares us as his beloved sons and daughters? **WHAT HAVE WE DONE** to deserve God’s grace and faithfulness towards us?

Despite our fallen expectation and shortcomings, God continued to reach out to us for the sake of redeeming us. More than 2,000 years ago, another star was born in the city of David in Bethlehem, for the one missional purpose in mind for all of humanity. At times we may have our doubts, fears, anxieties, and insecurities about our futures, but God promised that He will stand firm with us through the most challenging and uncertain times. God’s blessings will be poured out like a river, like the universe of stars beyond our human comprehension and sand upon the seashore![[5]](#footnote-5)

As the Psalmist declared in our responsive reading earlier, ***the LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?[[6]](#footnote-6) One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.[[7]](#footnote-7) Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD![[8]](#footnote-8)***

Let us keep journeying through the wilderness in the coming days with our hearts and our minds open and be receptive to the Spirit’s leading upon the beauty of God’s glory and promises in us. **For “a star has been born” and a Savior child is given to redeem all of humanity through our LORD Jesus Christ.** Thanks be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Genesis 15:6* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Matthew 8:26* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Debevoise, Daniel M. *Feasting on the Word,* Year C, Volume 2*,* P.54 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Galatians 3:29* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Genesis 22:17* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Psalm 27:1* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Psalm 27:4* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Psalm 27:14* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)