

Textual Analysis and Examen Questions for the Scriptures for September 11, 2016

Genesis 12:1-5a

New Revised Standard Version

¹Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from **your country** and **your kindred** and your father’s house to **the land** that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great **NATION**, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who **curse** you I will **curse**; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵ Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother’s son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.

Genesis 15:1-6

New Revised Standard Version

¹After these things the word of the **lord** came to Abram in a vision, “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” ² But Abram said, “**O Lord God**, WHAT WILL YOU GIVE ME, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is *Eliezer of Damascus*?”

³ And Abram said, “You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.” ⁴ But the word of the **lord** came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.” ⁵ He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” ⁶ And [Abram] **believed** the **lord**; and the **lord** reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Your country & the land :: עֲרֵץ [erets] in Hebrew meaning country and/or land, countryside, land or earth in general. It’s associated with the notion of God giving the “land” to the Israelites.

Your kindred :: מוֹלֶדֶת [moledeth] in Hebrew, meaning nativity (plural birth-place); by implication, lineage, native country; also offspring, family -- begotten, born, issue, kindred, native(-ity).

Your father’s house :: inherent is the movement of striking out, maturing, no longer being dependent upon a father or family. Nothing before this chapter in Genesis prepares us for this story. Abram appears, he becomes himself in trusting God’s call, leaving his homeland and father’s home to find a new home. He’s mandated to leave everything behind. In doing so, he finds himself. By extension this epic spiritual journey, quest for truth and movement towards an ideal is the central theme of the Bible and the vocation for all.

NATION :: (or people) in Hebrew the word ‘goy’ means nations, or peoples. It’s what is used here. It represents the Gentiles and is a political term, requiring a territorial base. ‘am in Hebrew is the word for ‘people’ used to for the people of God throughout the testaments. “The story, which marks the very beginning of the Biblical story of process, commences with one individual, extends to his family, then to a people and finally to a nation. It is not to be the story of an individuals or a family or a people. Rather it is to be the story of a society in quest of an ideal.” (E. A. Speiser, *Genesis.*, 87)

so that you will be a blessing : בָּרַךְ [barak] in Hebrew meaning to to kneel, bless, praise, salute. First used by God to “bless” the creation on the 5th day (Genesis 1:22), the word conveys the idea of being strengthened, of our weakness being compensated for with G-d’s strength. One of the nouns which derives from this root is the Hebrew word for “knee” (בִּרְךָ), which is one of the weakest parts of the body; i.e. the English idiom for fear-

Luke 3:1-20
New Revised Standard Version

¹ In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler[a] of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene,² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.³ He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,

make his paths straight.

⁵ *Every valley shall be filled,*

and every mountain and hill shall be made low,

and the crooked shall be made straight,

and the rough ways made smooth;

⁶ *and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”*

⁷ John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.⁹ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?”¹¹ In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.”¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?”¹³ He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.”¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his

-stricken “weak in the knees.” You can see even in English the relationship between the two words “knee” and “kneel.” In our weakness, we kneel before G-d and He provides His strength (lit. blessing). Thus a blessing from G-d is empowerment to be able to do what is not within our natural capabilities.

Curse :: אָרַר [arar] in Hebrew meaning “to curse.” At least three Hebrew verbs (’alah, ’arar, and qalal) can be translated “curse,” though these terms cover a variety of oaths, imprecations, maledictions, and covenant formulas uttered by people and the God of Israel. Curse can be defined as the use of powerful words to invoke supernatural harm. Curses can be human or divine, oral or written, personal or collective. Some curses are binding, whereas others are conditional, such as the covenant curses pronounced in Deut 27-29.

O Lord God :: in Hebrew he uses the ultimate term of respect “Lord Yahweh”

WHAT WILL YOU GIVE ME :: In Hebrew the literal phrase is “to what purpose are your gifts?” or “what will/can you give me?” It’s not the response of a spoiled or entitled person, but rather his response to the promise made in the preceding verses 15:1.

Eliezer of Damascus :: the closest male family member able to inherit.

Believed :: the literal wording is “to trust” – which can have a wider meaning than to believe.

‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; :: John the Baptizer is insisting upon Abrahamic ancestry, being part of the “people of God” as more than genetic or hereditary. It also has to do with our actions and practice – it’s a movement, not just an heirloom.

hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. ¹⁹ But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰ added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

Luke 9:23-27

New Revised Standard Version

²³ Then [Jesus] said to [them all,] “If any want to become my followers, let them *deny themselves* **and take up their cross** daily and **FOLLOW ME**. ²⁴ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? ²⁶ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the **kingdom of God**.”

Examen Questions to Ponder

- Faith is talked about in these scriptures as a life-vocation, a rupture with the past for a new life that is becoming. It’s not an add-on or downloadable app. As you reflect on your life journey how has faith been a rupture, a new beginning, a life-vocation? How has that been a blessing for you? Or possibly a great challenge (maybe still today)?
- Who or what do you follow in your daily life? Where do you prioritize the investment of your time, energy and resources? Biblicist theologian Walter Brueggemann writes that human culture calls us to death, whereas by faith we are invited to life. How do you see that in these scriptures? In your life? Our city? How are you being called to life, to call others to it?

Luke 9:23-27 immediately follows Luke 9:22 “Then he said to them all, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” , the first time that Jesus announces what we call his passion – the end he foresees of his mission costing his life. Here he is talking with his disciples in private.

to become my followers :: verse 23 literally reads “to come after me” in the sense of becoming a disciples. It’s more than just believing in his teaching, it’s a personal and human movement towards the one who represents God. It’s dynamic, participatory, anything but passively static. It necessitate a rupture with what came before.

deny themselves :: to disregard him(her)-self; to adopt an attitude that is not self-centered, but that authentically allows one to identify one’s conduct with Jesus and his mission. This is less an invitation to embrace and seek out suffering than it is to foresee that the love of God is indissociable from the love of neighbor. Such love cannot be realized without self-sacrifice and risking to share in the sufferings of others (acts of solidarity).

and take up their cross :: to literally take up the cross, (or stake as the Romans called it) that one sentenced to capital punishment in the Empire had to carry to the place of public execution at which they would die. It’s an invitation to not be ashamed by the judgement and condemnation of the Empire or powers that be, a whole-life embracing of the counter-cultural priorities of living a Jesus-centered life.

FOLLOW ME :: to follow, or to walk in the footsteps of another. It was the expression used to talk of how disciples would live in imitation of their rabbi teachers.

Son of Man :: this is the apocalyptic title used throughout the prophets, in particular the book of Daniel, to talk of God’s promised one to bring divine justice and peace.

kingdom of God don’t forget this expression can been kingdom, empire, sovereignty or royal power. It’s not limited to a geographic place.