

June 18, 2023

Third Sunday after Pentecost / Proper 6

Meditation: "Hope vs. Fear"

When I was young my father was seldom around. Of course, he was at the dinner table most nights, but he was off to work before us kids were up in the morning, and he didn't get home until just before dinner at 6, and then he was often out after dinner. We didn't see him on Saturdays, and Sundays was his day to read the paper, which we dare not interrupt. Many of the things I learned as a child, I learned from the kid across the street, which he learned from his father.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that my father did not offer a good role model to me of how to be a man, a husband, or a father. When I got old enough to start thinking of such things, the idea of becoming a father myself terrified me.

And then, when I found out I was going to be a father, I was terrified all over again. I was afraid because I thought I wouldn't know what to do.

Have you ever been afraid something would, or wouldn't happen?
What were you afraid of?

Some time after the age of 75, I imagine Abram was afraid too. Only, he was afraid that he would have no offspring. No one to carry on his calling from God. As a small family of homeless wanderers, having children was critical to the future. Without children, there would be no future. Abram's hope was the promise of children, and generations of descendants.

It makes me wonder, what are your hopes?

Ultimately, I settled down, got over the fear, and turned to hope. I hoped that my child would be healthy and happy, and that I would learn to be a good father.

Desmond Tutu said that "hope is being able to see there is light, despite all the darkness."

It strikes me, fear kills the future, while hope is all about the future.

Abram's hope of children and many descendants was not just a private hope. It wasn't just about him, as an individual. It was a hope that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the night sky where there is no light pollution. His hope was for a mighty nation of descendants. His hope was communal.

What are your hopes as a worshipping community?

In the end, Abram had a son, Ishmael, by his wife's maidservant, Hagar. Ismael became the father of a great nation. From him came the Arabs. And Abram had a son, Isaac, laughter, by his wife, Sarah. Isaac also became the father of a great nation. From him came the Israelites. And my daughter was born healthy and happy, and I was as good a father as I was able at the time.

May the choices you make reflect your hopes, and not your fears.