

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, Old Testament, Year C

TO ERR IS HUMAN. GIVING HEIRS IS GOD'S REWARD

Genesis 15:1-6

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 14)

Analysis by Mark Marius

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." 2But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." 4But 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." 5The Lord brought Abram outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then the Lord said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6And Abram believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

DIAGNOSIS: Taking Issue

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Wronged

In the eyes of Abram, time was running out. No child, therefore no heir, therefore no reward (see v. 1) from God. Time was passing by Abram and Sarai, so instead of feeling fruitful, they were feeling futile. Forget about blessings, Abram was feeling cursed by his family situation.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Fear

Out of fear of losing everything, Abram feels forced to name his own heir. Instead of feeling chosen by God, Abram is the one that has done the choosing—a slave from Damascus! Like Abram when we act on our fears we reveal our distrust of God's Word and Kairos.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Renege

When we put our own decisions and actions ahead of God, God takes issue with us. God condemns Abram's err by proclaiming: "This man shall not be your heir." Our legacies are not for ourselves but for God, and without God we will have no legacy to count on.

PROGNOSIS: Giving Heirs

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Promise

But instead of destroying Abram and his legacy, God gives a gift in the form of a promise. And it's this very promise that will lead to the entire world becoming Abram's heirs. These heirs will inherit a kingdom bigger than Abram's land. Because through Abram's issue comes the Savior of the world. And it is this One who becomes a slave to sin and is cast aside by God in order for us to receive God's good pleasure. The great reward is that through God's promise fulfilled, we all become children of God and inheritors of God's kingdom.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Trust

God's word that came to Abram produced belief and trust. Trust that God would do what God promised. That same Word comes to us through baptism. We are made heirs right alongside Isaac, Jacob, and all those others down the line. It is that Word producing trust that becomes our shield of protection when the fear and adversity in our world threatens to leave us forgotten and fruitless.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Righteous

And trusting what God gives and does through his Word keeps us from relying on our own wrong words. We hold to the righteousness that God shares through his promise. Instead of us feeling the need to fulfill the promise, we leave that up to God. We hold dear to the promise that God will use us to keep sharing and spreading his Word.