Full Scripture

Genesis 22:15 – 18 (NRSV)

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, ‘By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.’

Key verse

“and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.” Genesis 22:18

Key Concept

The blessing of God is intended for all nations, all people, not a select few. God not only blessed Abraham and his descendants with prosperity and hope, but all people regardless of nationality, race, creed, gender, ethnicity, or identity, so long as we obey God’s voice.
CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: We are all God’s children, called to this place to worship God’s holy name…

People: Let us come to hear God’s message of unity and love.

Leader: We gather in this place to lift up our praise to the One who gave us life eternal…

People: Let us come to hear of Christ’s redeeming sacrifice.

Leader: We rest in this holy place to grow our faith and hope in God…

People: Let us dwell in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy and Gracious God, giver of life and peace, grant that today as we gather in this place we might look around at the faces you have brought here. Each face hides behind it a story, but each face is made in your image. Remind us, that we are all your children and we are each called by name. Lift us from our divisions and quarrels that we might see one another as siblings and equals in your eyes. Fill us with your Spirit of love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness as we seek to know you more in our daily lives. This we pray in the name of the Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. Amen.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Creator God, grant that we may hear your word, walk in the path of the Redeemer, and be filled with the Sustaining Spirit this day and always. Amen.

LITANY FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Leader: Let us ask the Lord to strengthen in all Christians Faith in Christ, the Savior of the world.

People: Listen to us, O Lord.

Leader: Let us ask the Lord to sustain and guide Christians with his gifts along the way to full unity.

People: Listen to us, O Lord.

Leader: Let us ask the Lord for the gift of unity and peace for the world.

People: Listen to us, O Lord.

Leader: Let us pray. We ask you, O Lord, for the gifts of your Spirit. Enable us to penetrate the depth of the whole truth, and grant that we may share with others the goods you have put at our disposal. Teach
us to overcome divisions. Send us your Spirit to lead to full unity you sons and daughters in full charity, in obedience to your will; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The United Methodist Hymnal 556)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Leader: Lord, we confess our day to day failure to be truly human.

People: Lord, we confess to you.

Leader: Lord, we confess that we often fail to love with all we have and are, often because we do not fully understand what loving means, often because we are afraid of risking ourselves.

People: Lord, we confess to you.

Leader: Lord, we cut ourselves off from each other and we erect barriers of division.

People: Lord, we confess to you.

Leader: Lord, we confess that by silence and ill-considered word

People: We have built up walls of prejudice.

Leader: Lord, we confess that by selfishness and lack of sympathy

People: We have stifled generosity and left little time for others.

Leader: Holy Spirit, speak to us. Help us listen to your word of forgiveness, for we are very deaf. Come, fill this moment and free us from sin.

(The United Methodist Hymnal, 893)

BENEDICTION

The following may be sung as a congregation or read…it comes from The Faith We Sing #2226 Bind Us Together

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together with cords that cannot be broken.

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, Lord, bind us together in love.

There is only one God, there is only one King;

There is only one body, that is why we sing.

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together with cords that cannot be broken.

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, Lord, bind us together in love.

(The Faith We Sing, 2226)

As we are bound together across all divisions, may the God of love remind you that you are chosen, you are forgiven, and you are freed. And as you go from this place bind yourselves with the “other” with the blessing of Abraham. Amen.
Sermon Helps

THEME

Through Abraham God blessed All people of all places, not just those who look/act like us

OUTLINE

1. We live in a Global Society and a Post-Christian World
   - Discuss the “state of the union” from your perspective, include ideas about the socio-economic and political impact in your community
   - Discuss church attendance and engagement both for your own church and the greater community in which you live
   - Discuss the connected nature of our society through the power of TV/Internet/News media (you may even include examples of “fake news” that hit the headlines or tabloid/celebrity news items)
   - You may even give the example of the “degrees of Kevin Bacon” (more information found: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Degrees_of_Kevin_Bacon and https://www.cnn.com/2014/03/08/tech/web/kevin-bacon-six-degrees-sxsw/index.html)

2. Setting the Stage for Abraham’s Blessing
   - Give a synopsis of the story of Abraham and Isaac, though it is not the text for today, it is part of the bigger picture of Genesis 22:15-18
   - Explain the Biblical times world-view in contrast with our global society, in terms of diversity (or lack thereof) and recognition of other cultures (or lack thereof)
   - Read (or re-read) Genesis 22:15-18

3. All the Nations of the Earth
   - Abraham receives a blessing, which is amazing, but there’s more!
   - Abraham’s descendancy receive a blessing, which is also amazing, but there’s more!
   - Through Abraham’s faith all people receive a blessing
   - Explain that ALL includes diversity of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, identity, economic status, political views, social network, etc.
   - Use examples of the “other” in your community or ask the congregation for examples of “other” (examples could be homeless population, racial differences, sexual orientation, Republicans vs Democrats, age differences)
4. Made in the image of God
   - Explain imago Dei and apply it to this passage-We are all created in the image of God
   - Genesis 1:26-28
   - The blessing Abraham received and was commissioned to share was one based on the idea of imago Dei
   - God did not exclude anyone from the blessing (God didn’t say bless all of the people of all nations except ____fill in the blank____)

5. So what?
   - When we look back on the story of Abraham and Isaac, sure we get the idea that faith is important
   - But we also get the idea that all people are wanted/chosen/cared for/desired by God
   - All people are invited, not just a select few
   - Ask congregation to Look to your left, look to your right, each and every person here is different in some way from the others, yet all of us have been invited to be part of God’s family, we have all been invited into the blessing of Abraham, and furthermore, we are invited to share that invitation with all people
   - As you go from this place remember that each and every one of us has been invited into Abraham’s blessing and has the opportunity to invite others into that same blessing

Creative Worship Elements

Children’s song: Father Abraham (with motions)

HYMNS

- UMH 64/65 Holy, Holy, Holy!/¡Santo! ¡Santo! ¡Santo! *Interchange English & Spanish
- UMH 93 Let All the World in Every Corner Sing
- UMH 210 Toda la Tierra (All Earth is Waiting) *Both English & Spanish may be sung
- UMH 431 Let There Be Peace on Earth
- UMH 452 My Faith Looks Up to Thee
- UMH 454 Open My Eyes, That I May See
- UMH 467 Trust and Obey
- UMH 474 Precious Lord, Take My Hand
- UMH 545 The Church’s One Foundation
- UMH 547 O Church of God, United
- UMH 548 In Christ There is No East or West
- UMH 553 And Are We Yet Alive
- UMH 557 Blest Be the Tie That Binds
- UMH 560 Help Us Accept Each Other
- UMH 568 Christ For the World We Sing
- UMH 719 My Lord, What a Morning
- FWS 2126 All Who Hunger
- FWS 2130 The Summons
- FWS 2137 Would I Have Answered When You Called
- FWS 2151 I’m So Glad Jesus Lifted Me
- FWS 2152 Change My Heart, O God
- FWS 2190 Bring Forth the Kingdom
- FWS 2220 We Are God’s People
- FWS 2224 Make Us One
- FWS 2225 Who Is My Mother, Who is My Brother
CONTEMPORARY MUSIC THEMES

▷ Family/brothers & sisters in Christ
▷ Songs about Blessing—we are all blessed
▷ Music from other nations/in other languages reminding us of our global community in Christ
▷ Faithfulness

IMAGES AND SYMBOLS:

▷ Sacrificial Lamb
▷ Images of the Earth
▷ A Globe
▷ Use a Nicaraguan World Children’s stole or image of children of diverse nationalities holding hands around the globe
▷ Image of father holding child’s hand

Author: Rev. Nicole Henderson-Johns, West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church