

Lent 2A – March 20, 2011
John 3:1-17

Abram heard a sound, a voice, and it told him to that God had a new future in mind for him and for Sarai: The voice promised a new life in a new land where they would be surrounded by their children, and, more than that, God would bless the whole world through them.

Abram and Sarai believed the Word, received it and acted on it. They took all they could, but left the rest behind and set out to a place they had never been before, trusting that God would provide everything they needed, everything God promised.

Faith. Hearing the Word, Believing the Word, Acting on the Word.

That is Jesus' entire life.

Even though we know Jesus is the Word, he too hears the voice of the Father, trusts that Word and acts on it. He lives connected to the Father in trust and love.

One holiday season, Jesus comes to the temple in Jerusalem. Looking around at the way the religious machinery of the temple actually hindered people from worshipping, serving, loving and seeking God. Instead of inviting them into the presence of the Holy One; instead making God's ways known to all people; instead of living as the blessing to the whole world God has called them to be, the everyday economic and political realities have shaped them.

Jesus grabs a whip and clears the courtyard and calls the people what was going on. And when the clergy show up and ask him for a sign, he points to himself and says – destroy this temple and I will raise it up.

That's how John tells the story. He points to Jesus as the Word, the sound and voice of God in action. Nicodemus – a leader of the community, maybe a reformer at heart -- hears this voice and under cover of night he comes to seek that closer connection to God Jesus brings – a relationship to God based on faith and love.

Nicodemus hears in Jesus' Word and actions, God's Word for him, not against him.

He comes to Jesus, and immediately Jesus tells him that the Holy Spirit of God is at work. Nicodemus doesn't understand. It doesn't seem to make sense, but that's okay – Abram or Sarai didn't really understand, they just believed. Moses and Elijah and any of Jesus' other disciples didn't understand, but they heard, they believed, they acted, not by their own power, but moved by the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, they acted.

At the end of this part of the story, we know what Jesus will do: He will go to the cross and grave and rise again. We know what the Father will do: He gives the Son to us and for us. We know what the Holy Spirit will do: Create life, life in abundance, life into eternity through the creative power of the witness of God's Son, The Word.

But we don't know what happens yet to Nicodemus. Maybe because what he does or chooses isn't nearly as important as what God does for him or gives him out of love. What's important is that he's heard the Word and the Spirit is at work – giving life, creating faith.

Have we heard that voice? Is that why we're here this morning? Perhaps.

But ours is a noisy world. Filled with all kinds of sounds and voices: Most invite us to buy into some kind of life or lifestyle, made possible by this or that brand of stuff or thing. Religion can be like this, too. Always selling. Never giving.

Each day, we hear voices tell us what's going on in world, voices that tell us how to live or how to vote; how to work and so on. Seems everybody's talking and nobody's listening. In all the noise, it's difficult to hear God's voice, and yet the sound of God's Holy Spirit, like the sound of the wind can still be heard inviting us into new life with God.

We heard that voice claim us God's own child at our baptism. We hear that voice in the word of the confession that convicts us of sin and tells us the truth about ourselves, our actions, our inaction. We hear the Spirit speak life in the word of absolution that gives us God's forgiveness. We hear that voice in the meal where the Father gives the only Son so that we may believe and have eternal life, children of God.

There are other ways, other places, other times, when the Spirit of God speaks to us , out there in our daily lives. That's where the God's Spirit spoke to Abram.

So, where's God telling you to go? What's God inviting you to leave behind for the sake of new life in God? How's God making, shaping, molding you into a child of Abram and Sarai, a child born again by faith and raised up as witness to God's love?

Maybe that's the journey of Lent – to return again, daily to the waters of baptism to hear again, the words of love and promise God gives and to believe, simply believe and trust God's Spirit to bring the life that Jesus died and rose again to guarantee for you, a life, born again, born from above, a miracle ... In Jesus name.