

Genesis 15:1-6 The Blessed Crisis
Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16
August 10, 2025

Each season of the year has its attractions which compel our attention; winter with its cold temperatures and snow white glory, spring with its flowers-in-bloom display, and the crispness of fall with its dazzling yellows and oranges and reds that have to be seen to be believed.

To me, *this* season, late summer, at least in terms of the weather, is the most beautiful and compelling of the year. There is much in the world's cultural life that is affected by the weather throughout the year.

Daylight patterns and rainy times and temperature ranges affect when it is desirable to be outside, or inside, when winter activities are possible. When farming governed the culture more than it presently does, many of these cycles were associated with planting and harvesting; when school is open and closed, and when the prime business season occurs. One thinks of the recreational and sporting seasons.

Generally, sports are not only *affected* by the weather patterns, but they also shape and give an ambience to the seasons. Football is mainly a fall sport, I never have been able to get used to it in the spring. Basketball and hockey as well as skiing and ice skating are in the winter; baseball, golf, and tennis, are primarily attached to the summer. I follow track and field, which is also mainly a summer thing.

But there are some things that are not weather driven. People face the *seasons of life* and the implications thereof, whenever they arise, all the year round. There are health concerns and financial matters, celebrations of birth and bereavements whenever they happen. People do good and evil. There is no season for righteousness and sin.

The standard question about life's meaning is daily addressed regardless of the specific circumstances of our lives or of the world's life. The question of faith is ever-present, and is central to the experience of a healthy and full life. There is no time or situation in which it can be ignored, or that allows a rest from its demands. It is foundational even for people who claim it isn't, and for those who claim no faith. No faith *is* an expression of faith.

Some people are challenged by the presence of injustice in the world's life, of pain and suffering, the presence of evil. Others are able to set up an understanding of the world in a way that makes such questions less momentous, but are vulnerable nonetheless, when confronted with challenges in their personal situation.

One may experience a hard time believing because they are unable to hold together the idea of a loving and powerful God in the face of suffering. Another may come from a place of doubt or unbelief and yet be powerfully confronted with the presence of God, and not know what to do when their unbelief is challenged. Either way, the question is always at hand.

Many are too wrapped up in their own pursuits to give it much thought; but sooner or later they will have cause to question the meaning of their lives. *It is in the context of these times and these questions that the bible is to be considered and understood.*

Abram is among the first in the biblical story to be so confronted. He has had some kind of religious experience. He had become convinced that it was right for him to leave home in search of another place to be, another homeland, even though he was not sure where it would be found.

He believed he would be blessed with many descendants, but he had no children. The lack of physical evidence to confirm his convictions led to a crisis of faith. *All of life is a crisis of faith.*

We are told that he *believed* God. Very interestingly, his faith was not immediately honored with his sought after outcome. A child *was* coming, but it was delayed. On the contrary, of his faith the text tells us that the more immediate outcome was righteousness, *credited* righteousness, which means that believing God *is* right. Thus, his journey.

The idea of life as a pilgrimage finds its highest expression in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. There it is not only Abraham but a long list of characters from Israel's history that come to exemplify faith's journey to God.

It is a spiritual journey, which means that it can be traveled even by those who never leave home and ignored by those who are always traveling. It is a *journey of the mind*. It is a *journey of the heart*. It is a *journey of the soul*.

In the next few weeks the epistle reading will find its way through the last couple of chapters of this great letter. The roll call of faith will be transformed into a, "great cloud of witness, and into encouragements and instructions for the journey, with the implication that it is also *our* pilgrimage.

Along the way we are given gems, memorable statements that inspire us to reflect on the nature of faith. We are told that, "faith is the substance of the things hope for," that, "everything one can see has been made by what can't be seen."

We are told that these nomadic journeys made it clear that; "They were looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." The scene builds up until we come upon these high and holy words;

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing

for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.”

Likewise, we also journey, all these thousands of years later. The characterization of the life of faith as pilgrimage has not changed in the so-called, “modern,” era; neither the technological and political revolutions, educational and scientific advancements; or any other social changes, have been able to diminish the power this idea, of people on pilgrimage to heaven in faith, which encompasses as well as any idea and better than most the definition of humanity, what it means to be a person, a human being. Büchner called it, “a come-all-ye, a summons to pilgrimage.”

Along the way, we live in this place or that; this time or that. Some travel around and others stay put. We engage in vocational life; some teach and others farm; some use technical skills, and others administrative, some work in the private sector and others in the public. There is an endless array of vocational and extra-vocational avenues that form the footpaths of the journey - but one way or another we all make it together - because we believe.

Also along the way, we experience both good and bad times, ease and stress, plenty and want, joy and sorrow, summer and winter. We are able to give thanks because every phase of the journey is meaningful. There is nothing lost in the frivolity of the good seasons, for by grace they serve to draw us closer to

the destination. Nor is there despair in the bad times, because as only God can, the Lord redeems; shaping our character, strengthening our resolve, growing our faith, so that in the end we are forced to admit that with all its ups and downs, even the long boring stretches, and the times when a flood of events washes over, *it is a sacred journey, and its crisis of faith is a blessed crisis*, for it leads to life;

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

He is our hope and our peace.

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