

Reverend Sally's Sermon
Lent 2 February 28, 2021

For the past few weeks, I've been fostering a one-year-old cat named Daisy. She was rescued from a house that had 17 cats. My friend at the rescue agency said that the homeowner was a cat hoarder. In addition to the cats, there were also several dogs. So, as you can imagine, it was a chaotic environment. When Daisy arrived at my house, she was a bit traumatized. She was timid and she was hungry. She's still pretty small so I expect she was on the bottom of the food chain in that household. She may have been chased by the dogs. She may have been bullied by the larger cats. And when food was put on the floor, she may have been pushed out of the way by others. I don't know for certain what she faced, but by the time she came to my house, she was scared. When she first arrived, she refused to leave the protection of the cat carrier. Then when she finally did leave the carrier, she kept hiding under any piece of furniture that would provide a sense of shelter. But I waited patiently for her to want to know more about me. I carefully reached out my hand and let her sniff me. Eventually she cautiously came out from under the furniture. And when she did, I started scratching her behind her ears and under her chin. Eventually she got in my lap and we became friends. Now she trusts me completely. She's gone from hiding under everything to rolling on the floor with her tender underbelly exposed to the sky. For cats, that's the ultimate sign of trust.

In today's Old Testament lesson, we hear about Abram's trust in God. Abram was a man living in the land of Haran with his father and his family. Then the Lord God spoke to Abram. Leave your country and your father's house and I will lead you to a new land. I will make you a great nation. I will bless you so that you may be a blessing to others. So, Abram and his wife Sari packed up all their possessions and left their home and followed God to a new land, the land of Canaan. At that time Abram was 75.

Now Abram lived in Canaan for many years and prospered. He was a shepherd. His flocks grew and multiplied, and he became rich. But still he and Sarai had no children and the land that they lived in did not belong to them. One day when Abram was 99, the Lord God appeared to Abram. "I am God Almighty, walk with me...I will make a covenant between me and you." Then the Lord defined the promises of this covenant. The Lord promised Abram that he would be the father of many nations and descendants. The Lord promised that he would be God to Abram and to his children forever. He would be in a covenant relationship with them, providing for them and guiding them. And the Lord also made a third promise, which is not included in today's reading. The Lord promised Abram that one day the land on

which he stood would belong to his children. As a sign of this covenant, the Lord changed Abram's name. His name became Abraham which means ancestor of a multitude. And his wife became Sarah, which means woman of high rank. And Genesis tells us that because Abraham believed the Lord, because Abraham trusted in the Lord's promises, he was in a right relationship with God.

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul reminds us that it was faith that gave Abraham a relationship with God. He left all that he had known to go where the Lord led him. By doing so, Abraham placed his trust in God. Trust is one of the keys to living in a relationship with God. and the Lord was faithful to that trust. The Lord provided repeatedly for Abraham and his family. This included when the Lord allowed Sarah to conceive a child even when it seemed impossible because of her age. By enabling this to happen, God fulfilled his promise to make Abraham the father of many nations. God made what seemed impossible, possible. And Abraham trusted.

When we trust, we will see God act. Trusting isn't easy. It means letting go of some of our security. It means stepping out without knowing all the answers. But when we trust, we will see God act and we will learn that God is trustworthy. When this happens, faith will grow.

Right now, we're all facing many struggles. I know I am. Sometimes I feel like Daisy felt when she came into my house. I just want to hide under the furniture. But it is important to remember that we are not alone in this struggle. God is with us. God will lead us. God will provide. We can trust. The way forward may not be easy. It wasn't for Abraham. But as he trusted more and more, he learned that the Lord was indeed trustworthy. And his faith grew.

We also can trust in the Lord. When we do, God's blessings will be with us. But it does require something on our part. We can't receive God's gifts with clenched fists. We must take the risk to open our hands and our hearts. But when we open our lives in faith, we will find the blessings of our God.