**STOWE 20TH FEB 2022**

**GENESIS 13:1-12 PEACE**

This reading comes after the flood and after God has made a covenant, a special promise with Abram, and God asks Abram (who is now an old man) to leave his country and go to Canaan. Abram LISTENS to God and OBEYS him.

Abram was materially rich, and when he left his land he took his wife Sara, his nephew Lot and all his possessions and his servants – it must have been quite an undertaking.

Abram’s faith, and the importance he puts on it, is shown as he builds an altar for his devotions as he travels.

Now, there were a lot of people and animals travelling together – too many for them to be comfortable staying as one large group – there was not enough food and water for the animals, if they all camped in one place.

And quarrelling arises between the herdsmen, who obviously wanted the grass and water each for their own animals.

Abram sees that there is enough for everyone in God’s creation, but realises that they need to split up, spread out and share these resources. Here is an important lesson for us today, to share creations resources.

In verse 8, Abram says to Lot ‘let’s not have any quarrelling between you and me’. He sees there is tension developing and he brings it into the open and states he does not want to quarrel. What another great lesson for humankind today! Abram goes further and acts on this wish not to quarrel by proposing a solution – Abram proposes that they share the land.

Importantly, he lets Lot choose first which part of the land he would like. This is an inspiring example of kindness, and treating others the way we want them to treat us – Abram puts Lot before himself

Now God has previously promised land to Abram, promised that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars, so Abram could have felt important or entitled, but he is not greedy, he is kind, he shares.

Abram knew that God was with him and he trusted Him = he lived his life in relationship with God, and here he acts for peace, and acts unselfishly.

In fact, later on in Genesis when Lot, who chose Jordan, is imprisoned it is Abram who goes to Hebron and rescues Lot. Even though they have parted, Abram still cares about Lot and will act to help him.

So, what can we learn from Abram’s example?

* Abram ACTS for peace – he says I don’t want to quarrel and proposes a solution
* Abram SHARES, he is kind and humble, putting Lot before himself. Jesus calls us, as Christians, to love our neighbour as ourselves
* Abram lives his life in prayerful relationship with God and trusts in His promises – it is this way of living that enables Abram to act as he does.

I recently saw a wonderful short film – a man holds a glass full of water out in front of him, the water representing his worries, fears cares etc. As he holds the glass out in front of him his arm starts to get tired, it takes more and more of his physical and mental energy to hold the glass until eventually he cannot focus on anything else but holding the glass.

So what does he do?

He puts the glass down! And then he can breathe, and relax and think straight again.

When we too have worries and cares, we also need to ‘put the glass down’, we need to hand them to God and let Him help us carry them. The worries etc are still there but out trust in God gives us peace of mind, as we know He will help us.

Abram let Lot choose because he trusted God to care for him and to keep His promise. Abram had the peace of mind, the security to do the right thing and trust God.

That peace of mind is available to us too. In john 14:27 Jesus says “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you” The peace that the victory is won, that God is with us through his Holy Spirit and that we are member of Gods eternal kingdom.

I wanted to finish by briefly mentioning *shalom*, the Hebrew word for peace. Wishing someone shalom means actively wanting wholeness, tranquillity, joy and full life for someone, wanting the best possible for them, actively wanting it.

This is what Jesus has given us! Amen