



Desert Places: Navigating in the Desert Place

Date: Sunday 13th September

Speaker: Jeff Stamps

Key Verses: Hebrews 11: 1-2 & 8-16a

Talk Summary: How can we allow faith to be our navigating principle as we look to the future?

1. Abraham – Navigated by faith (v8-9)

- Abraham was called by God, he was given promises, and he was told to go. – Just like us.
- Like Abraham we are going without knowing, how did he navigate in the desert?
- Abraham stayed on track by having a kingdom mind-set (v10+ Matthew 6:33)
- Abraham set God's promises before him and he examined himself, his actions and his thoughts and emotions, as long as he was drawing them in line with what God had said he knew he was going in the right direction.
- That is what the Big three practices are all about, or any other spiritual discipline.
- Abraham was going without knowing, so he navigated by faith.
- We navigate by faith through developing a prophetic imagination shaped by God's promises

2. Sarah – Renewed her mind (v11)

- Sarah's leading thought, the thought that shaped all her other thinking, was that God is faithful to his promises. Or you could say her navigating principle was faith in God's faithfulness.
- Sometimes God propels his people and sometimes he prepares his people. Desert places - are times of preparation. Preparation for something new and better.
- I am convinced that God is using this time to prepare us; individually and as a Church for something new and better.
- If we are stepping into something new, then old ways of thinking aren't going to work. We need to preparing for something new by renewing our thinking.
- How do we do this? - We reflect, we repent and we are renewed.

3. Abraham and Sarah knew that their focus determined their direction (v15-16)

- Abraham and Sarah's focus was on the coming kingdom,
- It is by cultivating an imagination shaped by the coming kingdom, that we can partner with God in shaping a better future.
- I have found myself being increasingly uncomfortable with this phrase – back to normal
- I've also got a growing sense that God's desire is not simply for restoration, but for reformation.
- The kingdom of God advances, it does not go backwards.
- God's best for us is not to plan for a return to the past, but by faith to fashion a better future.
- If we aren't intentional, we are just going to drift back to the way things were.

Worship

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?
- What has God been speaking to you about this week? (*Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it*)

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- How are your spiritual practices working for you? Which of the big three to you need to establish to help you navigate in this desert place?
- In this time have you found yourself tending towards fear or faith?
- How can we develop a kingdom focused prophetic imagination?

Self-Reflection Questions

- What have I learned about myself in this season?
- What have I learned about my faith in this season?
- What have I learned about God in this season?
- What things, practices, habits, relationships etc. Do I want to maintain as lockdown eases?
- What if anything have I enjoyed about this time?
- What have I appreciated having a break from?
- Have there been any surprising benefits of not doing something (money/time saved)
- In my best moments, what do I day dream about?
- How am I taking steps to fulfilling what I think God has spoken to me?

Witness

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus.

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?

Note to Small Group Leaders: Please note that if you'd like to review the sermon, or have a hard time following the video, you can use subtitles on YouTube. On the YouTube video, click the "closed captioning" button (bottom left of YouTube video screen, first button). Google "how to show subtitles on YouTube videos" if you need help with this.