

It is Never too Late to Transform and Change

It is never too late for God to do something miraculous in your life. At any age and in any stage God, can enter into your story to transform you. It is never too late to change.

Abram was 75 years old when God met him in Ur and drew his eyes up to the vast night's sky and promised that he would one day father a great nation more numerous than the stars. But he would have to leave his homeland and his family and follow God on a great journey. And Abram was nearly 100 years old when God appeared to him and said that Sarai his wife would finally have a child after all of this time of being unable to conceive, and all of their disappointment and grief. The promise had not been forgotten, Sarai would finally fulfill her role of being matriarch to a nation and Abram would be the nation's father for generations and generations.

It sounded too good to be true. I wonder if it also sounded scary. Could Sarai physically carry a child? Did Abram have the energy to father a nation? Or enough time left to see it grow?

And while the news was full of joy, I wonder if Abram and Sarai really wanted to keep up their nomadic traveling at this stage of their lives. After years of setting up tents in the desert without a permanent home I, for one, would be a little tired.

But their story wasn't over. God was calling them into the next iteration and giving them the ability to carry it out. In the book *The Hero's Journey*, Joseph Campbell describes the journey that all heroes undergo within mythology. The hero (or heroine) begins in the comfort of their home without any major conflict. Then something forces or compels them to leave home on a great quest. Their journey involves obstacles, setbacks, and tests, meeting unexpected guides, friends, and foes, and throughout all of it, they are learning lessons and being changed. Eventually their journey reaches a decisive crisis. They overcome the challenge and achieve their goal, and they can

finally return home, now transformed, able to contribute all they've learned to their community.

But lest you think their journeys are over, something will set the cycle back into motion, and the hero will set out again to learn new lessons. Because as long as we live, at any age and in any stage, God is entering into our stories in order to transform us. It is never too late to take a risk to grow and change, to continue on your quest or to begin a new one.

Abram and Sarai begin the next stage of their hero's journey when God fulfills this promise and gives them new names Abraham and Sarah. Their new names designate the changes taking place within them. In continuing forward, they are taking all of the lessons they have already learned and applying them in a new way for the greater good of their community.

And as Abraham and Sarah, their faith will continue to grow, because they are trusting and surrendering and obeying in ways they have never had the opportunity to before. And in this they are becoming fuller, more authentic versions of themselves, people who have the spiritual fortitude to be able to carry out God's long awaited vision, and to be the matriarch and patriarch that Israel needs, people who have given up everything again and again to follow God, from their home to their very identities.

Jesus talks about something similar in our Gospel reading this morning when he says:

If you want to become one of my followers you will have to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.

For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel will save it.

In other words, you have to be willing to let go of your life as you know it in order to set out on the great spiritual journey of following Jesus.

While this will involve obstacles and tests and suffering, your quest is taking you deeper into the heart of God and transforming you more into your authentic self.

to your community and relationships, because it is never too late to lose your life as you know it, and to find your real and eternal life in God.

Amen.

This doesn't always involve a geographical move, but it does always involve internal changes. It could be that you stay right where you are but face a crisis in your life, perhaps through losing a significant relationship or financial security, health, your reputation, or a long held belief. This sets into motion changes in your life that you likely didn't want, but in choosing to let Jesus guide you through it you will have the chance to let go of what you had previously found security in, or who you thought you were, or beliefs that no longer hold true, and in their place you can recover your true identity in God, and become a fuller, more authentic version of yourself. As Jesus said: if you want to save your life, you have to first lose it.

This is the pattern of Lent and Holy Week. We let go of our worldly attachments and empty ourselves so that Christ can be born in us, and we can be resurrected into God's fullness of life, so that even now while we are in this world, we can participate in eternity.

And this happens every year. Because our journeys are continuous, every year we have to be reminded that our stories are not over. Just like Abraham and Sarah, as one stage ends another is beginning. To our last breath, God is an active presence in our lives that is carrying out divine purposes in us and for the whole world.

Abraham and Sarah's story reminds us that we can always set out on the next iteration of our spiritual journeys and undergo the next stage of our transformations. It is never too late to trust and surrender and obey in ways you may never have before, or to shift your identity to be more oriented towards God, and more filled with Christ, or to let the losses and challenges in your life be the catalyst that uncovers a more authentic version of who you are, leading you deeper into the very heart of God, and becoming the gifts that you bring