

## Trinity 6 (2025)

Some years ago, a group from this church went to see a replica of the Bayeux Tapestry on display at Northwest Georgia College in Carrollton.

In case you are not familiar with the Bayeux Tapestry, it is a 230 feet long, 20 inch tall, piece of fabric with embroidered scenes telling the story of the Norman invasion of England under William the Conqueror in 1066.

The original tapestry dates from the 11<sup>th</sup> century and is normally housed in France but is set to go on display in the British Museum next year.

Why am I telling you about the Bayeux Tapestry? /// The Old Testament might be thought of as a “Bayeux Tapestry.”

The scenes are not laid out on fabric but in a collection of books. The conquest is not of England by a Norman military leader, but of sin and death by God Almighty in the person of His Son Jesus Christ.

Read the Old Testament with Jesus in view, and it comes alive.

Indeed, Jesus Himself said the Hebrew scriptures should be read in this way. **“Search the scriptures . . . they are they which testify of me,”** He told the Jewish religious leaders of His day (John 5:39).

The first scene on this tapestry is of God creating the world, then standing back and pronouncing what He had made, good, Genesis 1:31.

The second scene is of God’s image-bearing creatures, whom He had placed in His Garden to be His wise caretakers, rebelling, trying have it

their own way, and being driven out of the garden. The gate is shut. That scene comes in Genesis 3.

The frames that follow depict what comes *after* man's rebellion, after he had become subject to sin and death. We learn from them that God's love and care does not cease. He puts in place a plan to put right what had gone wrong.

Abraham shows up in quite a few of these early frames. From them we learn that it will be through his offspring that God's rescue of the human race will come.

The frame at which we are looking this morning is one of those Abraham frames. It is as interesting as it is mysterious.

I say mysterious because one of the three strangers who shows up at Abraham's tent door seems to be a manifestation of the pre-incarnate

Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus before Jesus.

If you remember how the passage opens, we are told that “the LORD appeared unto him [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre.”

In our English Bibles, LORD is in upper case letters, signifying that this title refers to Yahweh. Furthermore, after the three strangers are brought into the story, Abraham continues to address “My LORD”.

This is not the first time God, presumably in the person of the Second Person of the Trinity, had appeared to Abraham. Two earlier encounters are recorded in Genesis 12 and 17.

How and in what form the Son of God appeared to Abraham on these earlier occasions we are not told.

It *may* have been through visions, but more likely it was in the form He appears in today's reading . . . visibly as a man.

Whatever the case, Abraham recognizes Him, believes His words and follows His lead.

The first lesson we might learn from Abraham's encounter with the LORD is **to be open and receptive to voice of God.**

Abraham recognized that it was God who was present and speaking, and we should as well.

We should not imagine God to be a far-away deity, but One near-at-hand . . . one who cares and who comes. One who comes:

- to direct in times of uncertainty,
- to strengthen when we have exhausted our own resources,

--to prod when we have fallen into a comfortable rut,  
--to bring light to our darkness.

I might add we have an advantage over Abraham. We have the scriptures to authenticate the voice of God.

What I mean by “authenticate” is we have a sure means of testing the voices that come into our heads or come to us from outside. If what we are hearing does not square with what is in the Bible, it is not God who is speaking.

If these messages are in line with scripture, hear and heed them. Say with the boy Samuel: **“Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.”**

Or perhaps: **“Lord, come be my guest as you were Abraham’s. I open my heart and house to you.”**

That might well be the first take-away from this reading.

A second concerns **a virtue commended in both testaments – hospitality.**

Abraham and Sarah practiced hospitality when those three mysterious strangers showed up on their doorstep.

Paul likewise commends this virtue in the New Testament. In Romans 12:13, he charges his readers in Rome to share their material resources with fellow believers and to be “**given to hospitality**”.

There was a practical necessity for hospitality in those days. As the Gospel went out into the larger world, those carrying it needed food and lodging. For the most part, fellow Christians provided it.

Hospitality remains a sign today that one's faith is real.

Look for ways to show it, not just to people you know, but to those you don't. After all, in Hebrews 13:2 we are told that "some have entertained angels unawares."

Bringing this down to the present, during this past year's Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, several of us were standing on the porch of the church welcoming those coming to eat.

As we did, we noticed three young men, obviously foreigners, walking down the street. We called out to them and invited them to come in and eat without cost.

One spoke a little English and relayed our message to the other two. They accepted our invitation.



Before going downstairs to eat, however, they wanted to go into the church. Upon entering, they reverently knelt and crossed themselves. After which, one walked to the altar and placed on it a dollar bill. For all I know, it was all that he had.

Then they came downstairs, where they were warmly welcomed and fed.

Hospitality is a practical virtue. It is something we can do now, something that pleases God.

So far, we have looked at two ‘take-a-ways’ from today’s passage of scripture.

The first: recognizing God when He shows up in our lives and obeying His voice.

The second: following Abraham and Sarah’s example of hospitality. Receiving everyone as Christ.

But there is a third, that take-a-way concerns impossible situations.

Towards the end of today's passage, we find Sarah laughing at the thought that she, at her advanced age, was going to have a baby. In response, the Divine Messenger asks: **“Is anything too hard for God?”**

His question does not get answered with words. But it does get answered.

Initially, it gets answered around a year later when Sarah gives birth to Isaac. He was the son of promise and bearer of the Covenant. One of those scenes in the biblical tapestry would have to feature him.

But the great sign that nothing is impossible with God comes many year later when God the Father raises Jesus from the dead.

More than that, God is still in the business doing the ‘impossible’ . . . still raising dead men up.

Saul of Tarsus in the New Testament stands as an example. The persecutor becomes the proclinator of the Good News.

A more recent example is a man I know personally. His name is Thomas Tarrants.

Back in the 1960s, he was a Klan terrorist and almost died when he was fired upon by the FBI while planting dynamite under the bedroom window of a Jewish businessman in Meridian, Mississippi.

He is now the President Emeritus of the C.S. Lewis Society in Washington, DC, and a champion of racial reconciliation. I might add, through the Gospel of Christ.

His most recent book is entitled “Consumed by Hate: Redeemed by Love”.

Is anything too hard for God? Tom Tarrants would answer, no.

I don’t know what is going on in your life, but just perhaps you find yourself in a situation too big for you to handle.

Let me conclude by saying, the God who showed up at Abraham and Sarah’s tent is alive and remains on the job. Nothing is too hard for Him. Pass Him your perplexity.

The biblical tapestry tells a real story, one that continues today. Find your place in it, be encouraged and go forward into the battle of life.