

Sunday, August 7, 2022 – Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
“A Sure Hope and Promise”

Genesis 15: 1-6

Rev. Derek S. Klemm – Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV
Frame and Refrain

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father – and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

In the dark and cold December of 1944, it was hard to hold onto hope. The future was far from certain. Europe had been at war for over five years. Allied forces, including the United States, had landed at Normandy on D-Day just that June and punched their way through much of Nazi-occupied western Europe. As the Allies marched toward Germany, the freezing cold, battle-weary, under-manned and under-equipped U.S. Army 101st Airborne Division managed to hold off a ferocious, last-ditch German assault for ten days under some of the most difficult conditions imaginable. They were in Bastogne, Belgium – today we know this as part of the Battle of the Bulge. Can you see the men holding off this attack? They don't look so different from the college students and 20-somethings here today. They're the ones with dirt smeared on their faces. They're the ones with their dilapidated boots tied together with their last spare sock. They're covered in freezing mud, dug into foxholes, clutching their rifles, a thin layer of snow covering them in their sleep until they jump to readiness as explosions go off around them. Some are injured – some, pretty badly. Some won't make it. In the worst part of the fighting it seems unimaginable that better days might lay ahead. Some are even resigned to the idea they are going to die. But these men hold off the enemy long enough. They inspire the entire free world with their valor. And in the dawn of a new day, an Allied victory in the war, though not yet here and of a date yet uncertain has become **inevitable. Even in this longest of waits, victory is inevitable.**

In our Old Testament text today, Abram had a different kind of wait to endure. Now in his mid-80's, God had some years earlier promised Abram he would bless him and make his name great. God promised him that all nations of the earth would be blessed through him. The problem was that no suitable heir was to be found – Abram and his wife Sarai had not had any children and they were now

past the age to have children. Weary of waiting, impatient, Abram's spirits were low. In hard times, it can be difficult to see the forest through the trees. Abram had no choice but to wait.

God's promise to Abram became even more specific. Abram's heir would be his own son, from whom descendants would be so numerous as to outnumber the stars in the sky. But living in the in-between time, waiting for the promise to be delivered, can be hard. Even with God's sure and certain promise, Abram tried to make things happen, to get the ball rolling on his own, with his wife's servant, Hagar, and she had a son, Ishmael. But God told Abram, now renamed Abraham, this was still not the promised son. He'd wait another 13 years, until he was 99 years old, for the promised son Isaac to be born. Abraham was overjoyed – after waiting so long, the promise had come true, God had overcome nature to bring about what seemed impossible. Because of God, **even in the longest of waits, victory is inevitable.**

But Abraham still didn't see the full measure of God's promise with his own eyes. God's promise outlasted Abraham's life on this earth. He wouldn't live to see generation after generation, his descendants growing into a nation called the Israelites, or see them take over an entire country for their own, where for a short time they were the most powerful people in that part of the world. He didn't live to see those people eventually taken over but in the process being spread throughout all the known world, influencing cultures and touching lives throughout the world. And he didn't see the ultimate purpose of God's promise – where God Himself would take on human flesh, flesh from Abraham's line, and that descendant who we call Jesus Christ would die on behalf of every single person in human history so that everyone could be adopted into God's family. God's promise was more profound and far-reaching than Abraham's wildest dreams. **Even in the longest of waits, victory is inevitable.**

We are also waiting. We're in an in-between time, waiting for God's promises to happen, waiting for inevitable victory. Jesus has come, died on the cross, risen from the grave, defeated death

and satan and sin. We have been raised already in a spiritual sense, in our baptism, raised to new life. But yet we still find ourselves sinning. We still suffer, we still die. What about God's promises to us?

Let's turn our attention again to those valiant soldiers fighting off the attack. See those people, mud-covered? Beleaguered Bloodied? Hurt? Look again. They are not all young men of fighting age. They are men and women, children and elderly people – in fact, **they are us**. Assaulted on all sides by a last-ditch, desperate attempt by an insane Axis of satan, the world and our own sinful flesh, oh sure, we take our licks. We suffer casualties and calamities. We fight in a frontal assaults against death and disease in ICU's and nursing homes, chemo treatments and freeway wrecks. Some of us are victimized by those who are supposed to love us most, suffering abuse. Or things go wrong on every front – the job, the family, everywhere. From a greater distance the enemy lobs temptations our way, so that we would be maimed before he closes in for the kill – addiction to alcohol and drugs or sex or gambling. Or perhaps those volleys come in the form of guilt, guilt over harsh words said to loved ones, guilt over past sins, guilt that makes us feel so low that we suppose God could never forgive us. More subtle still, the enemy lays booby traps – getting us to buy into the lie that we will find fulfillment in money, fun and entertainment or a million other things, things which in themselves are not bad but when they become our top priority we've walked right into the trap and the enemy springs it – we've been caught.

Christians are not immune to this, in fact, we're the target of choice. We're targeted because the enemy doesn't have us yet. es, we do take our licks. No sense sugarcoating this one. But do not lose sight of the forest through the trees. eyond the forests of Bastogne in 1944 lay victory. Beyond this fight, against our greatest enemy, victory is inevitable. It is inevitable because Jesus Christ is in charge, he lives in us, he sends us the Holy Spirit. **Even in this longest of waits, victory is inevitable.**

Just like God's promise to Abram though, there are two parts to the promise coming true. For Abram, he saw a *little bit* of the promise in the miraculous birth of his son Isaac. But the best part of the promise was centuries away, when Jesus made Abraham the father of many nations. Our greatest hope,

the day when Jesus comes again, is still ahead. But in the meantime, we catch glimpses, we have Isaac moments where hope abounds. Even now, in the midst of battle and chaos Jesus restores a *little bit* of order at a time. How does he restore order, how does he come and make himself known to us?

God doesn't only protect us, He also supplies us with our brothers and sisters in arms, as Jesus gives us a glimpse of the days to come, an Isaac moment. Are you struggling with some kind of an addiction? There are safe people here, where we can point you and your loved ones to the help needed and where God's Word of forgiveness is always sure for we repentant sinners. Are you suffering abuse – and make no mistake, any unwanted, aggressive physical or sexual contact is abuse – Jesus has given us to you for support and encouragement, to guide you to safe places. If what I'm saying applies to you, please let somebody in to help. Is something not going well? Do you need assistance in something? We cannot adequately help each other if we do not know one another's needs. Do you have a victory to celebrate? Are you happy? We're here to rejoice with you. These are all reasons why God has brought us into community together. It's a huge reason why we're starting up Rooted this fall. It's why we have these annual rededication ceremonies for our faculty and staff. As we work together, we cherish these Isaac moments along the way. We're at war – success in arms means depending on each other, whom God has given for us. **Even in this longest of waits, victory is inevitable.**

Our hope for victory is not in ourselves though. It's the descendant promised to Abraham. He is the one who helps us now and sometimes we are blessed to see Him at work in our lives, in Isaac moments.

And so we wait. Make no mistake – Victory Day is coming soon and a New York ticker tape parade won't hold a candle to the glory of that day. You see, the victory over death will be complete on that day. Just as Jesus was raised from the dead already, God will raise our physical bodies. God will knit back together the body and soul so cruelly ripped apart at death and give us new, perfect, immortal bodies. **Even during this longest of waits, our victory is inevitable, in Jesus Christ our Lord.** Amen.