

## **BOLD FAITH**

Today is not a time for bland faith or for blind faith. This is a day for bold faith. Blind faith ignores what is happening and goes on as before. Bland faith conforms to whatever comes and makes no choices. Bold faith sees the signs, and discovers why and to where we are moving. Bold faith is a powerful mixture of knowledge and uncertainty. In the 12th chapter of Genesis, we are told that Abraham knew who called him to his journey, why he was called, and the direction of his pilgrimage. However the exact routes and the challenges along the way were a mystery. But he knew to expect the unexpected because "somebody warned him."

Jesus calls no one to simply exercise blind faith. In Luke 12:54-56 He tells the ordinary folks (not just the inner core of disciples) to activate faith by knowing what they know. They know that when the west wind blows clouds across the mountains, rain will come. They know that when the wind blows from the south, from the hot desert, scorching heat is on its way. He bids everyone to use in faith what they already know. The "signs of the times" are there for all to see, but those who would see must exercise bold faith.

Neither Abraham nor Jesus meets change by simply obeying the trends of the times. That is blind faith. Within almost all of us is the temptation to give up to the almost total uncertainty that seems to be the norm these days. Too many people assume that blindness equals faith and faith equals mission for God. Jesus wants a seeing church, one that knows why as well as where we are going. However the mission of the church does not happen in a vacuum. Jesus is teaching and modeling the church as he reads the signs and acts boldly upon those signs. Jesus wants knowledgeable, discerning, disciplined disciples, trained for mission. The mission of the church, Christ's church, is to be modeled from Abraham and Jesus. Mission only happens when we learn the truth, tell the truth, and live the truth. The truth of Abraham's time was that Ur was no longer a place compatible with the promises of God. God's promises need a strange, even alien place; strange people, new faces, unreached masses in order to be realized. The reality of Jesus' life was that God's mission could not be

boxed in by narrow Jewish laws. It must break out to the unwashed, unwanted, and unclean. Only then could the washed, wanted and clean have hope.

Like Abraham, we are called to live in a strange new world, but to claim it as God's world. Sometimes this is scary, but to acknowledge that is to touch the hem of the garment of His truth. Sometimes America today just does not seem like the America we remember and love. But we, as Christians, have ALWAYS been called to see America as a mission field. Jesus Christ prepares disciples for the new, the strange, the untried and the unfamiliar. Leonard Sweet puts it this way: "It is not our future that is pulling us in. It is God's future. And in that future God will not be without a witness. God will be there."

*The Rev. Bert Eaton is Rector of St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church , located at 503 W. Broad St. in Swansboro.*