

## **The Birth of a Nation ...**

### **But We're not the Momma!**

#### **Genesis 12: 1 - 3**

Back in the 80's there was a sitcom called "Dinosaurs". Maybe you've heard of it. I hesitate to reference it because it ages me and exposes my corny and twisted sense of humor.)

The main characters were these Claymation dinosaurs that comprised a family – a mom and dad, a teenage brother and sister, a baby - even grandparents.

They all had human-like characteristics. They spoke English, wore clothes, lived in a house. The kids went to school, dad went to work, and the mother kept house – a traditional family in every sense of the word, except for the goofy fact they were dinosaurs.

Anyway, one of the show's ongoing themes was that the father dinosaur was always trying to gain love and respect from the baby, but the baby was a terror to say the least – more than that – completely outrageous and out of control.

And he would do all sorts of outlandish things in order to get whatever he wanted. Whether it was food, attention, or presents, the baby dino would pull the craziest stunts to make sure everyone knew that he was the center of the universe and that his cravings and desires were top priority.

The whole thing was a woeful situation, but it made for such great comic relief: For once, the audience had the chance to witness rude and disrespectful behavior coming from a living species that wasn't classified as human!

The major catch phrase of the show was “Not the mama.” The baby dino would gleefully yell this loudly every time daddy dinosaur entered the room. It became the iconic saying of the show.

Not the Mama!

But why, you ask, would I refer to such a silly show?

Well, because we too are “not the mama” of this great country in which we live.

We weren't around in 1776 when the Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia to declare war on England and to sign the Declaration of Independence.

We weren't around when the colonies voted to bear arms against the mother country who wanted all the colonies' goods, services, but none of their representation.

We're probably 8 generations removed from that monumental time in America's life.

And we can go back further into history:

The Pilgrims arrived in the New World in 1620, obeying what they believed to be God's will, to put down roots in a new land so that they could live in freedom as their consciences and faith dictated.

They survived prejudice, persecution, theft, robbery, diseases, extreme weather, and a leaky worn-out ship – all this before they ever left Europe's shores!

We're now 13 generations removed from the time this small contingency of people made the courageous decision to follow God much like Abram did when God said to him in Genesis 12, *“Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.”*

No, we've missed out on many of the most monumental events and watershed moments when it comes to the historical journey of our country:

Its discovery and exploration – think of Lewis and Clark,

its pioneering and establishment,

its organization and fight for freedom,

its struggle to maintain its unity and to recognize each person as God's creation deserving of the gifts of Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Many of us have even missed the call to help other people and nations fight for their freedoms and liberty.

We're not the mama of any of that. Instead, we're the children, the offspring of those who had a great vision, who said to themselves and to others ... We're convinced that mankind *can* live in harmony with their neighbor if only each individual would look to God for governance in their own personal lives.

No, we're not the Mamas nor the Papas. (And I'm not talking about the 60's singing group.)

We're the beneficiaries of those who have gone ahead of us and paved the way often with their own body, blood, and personal sacrifice.

When this country began, a nation truly was born - a nation under God, but we can take no credit for its formation even as we marvel at its existence.

But just because we weren't there at its founding doesn't mean that there aren't more significant moments that lie ahead for us.

We can't just sit here and say we haven't any skin in the game.

We can't just sit back and say... oh well, this is what we've inherited, I guess I'll just have to make do.

No, the conception, the delivering, and the nurturing of this child – this country, though not easy or glamorous – is still just the beginning! We're only 250 years into this experiment!

As the old parental saying goes ... small children, small problems. Big children, big problems.

To be sure, our country is no longer the cute little baby whose tantrums are comical and fairly contained and make us want to reach for our cameras, so we document the life of our little monster.

Our country is now a full- grown physical adult, but usually with the mental and spiritual capacity of a spoiled toddler, and it's been unleashed on society to wreak havoc like the Staypuff Marshmallow man in the movie Ghost Busters!

Look at our society and its continual unraveling: Whether its stealing or murdering or abortion or grooming our little ones to embrace deviant and immoral behavior, or just a plain disregard for human civility in general, we know deep down it is because we turned our hearts away from God and have decided we know better than Him. .

We also instinctively know this is not the way God intended us to carry out our lives.

We also instinctively know that we are supposed to be part of the solution, not the problem. And yet many of us feel like the train has already left the station, and there's nothing we can do about it.

Not a good feeling. We should be deeply troubled and extremely concerned about the situation in which this country finds itself.

And the scary thing is that it's tempting to see the spiritual condition of our society and want retreat and go into survival mode – to protect our own property, domain, and culture even as we watch the rest of the world burn up.

Do you ever feel this way?

I know I do a lot of the time. Sometimes I think to myself ... Bill, you can't even organize and straighten out your own sock drawer. Why in the world would you think you'd have something to say or do to help somebody else's life?

And this thought would be true from a worldly perspective, except for the fact that what I'm trying to relay is not my thoughts but what God is trying to say and do, in and through me – and God is living, and loving, and true and He wants - **and is able** to help the world and all those who live in it – if only we would return to Him.

So, I guess what I'm trying to say to you this morning is that the birth of a nation begins with the birth of one person because when we think about it, a nation, at its most elemental state is a group of people.

But the birth I'm talking about isn't a physical birth, but a spiritual one. In other words, our nation can begin to have a rebirth only when we personally have a rebirth.

So, we didn't get in on the ground floor when our country was born.

We missed that big event. But that's not our fault. God calls us to live out our lives in the time He has ordained for each of us!

And He brings situations and people and opportunities into our lives today that no one else will ever have - and they will only be touched by us!

Abraham and Jacob, the Apostles Paul and Peter ... they're not here to influence your neighbor's life – some of their words are still with us – but it's you and me that will have a direct impact on their lives because we're the ones living beside them in real time!

Recall the words of Mordecai to his cousin Esther when he was persuading her to help save the Jewish people from Haman's evil scheme: *"Who knows but that you have come to a royal position for such a time as this?"*

But some of you may protest. Pastor, it's easy for Mordecai to say these words to Esther. She had endless resources:

The king was in love with her!

She was connected to the most powerful person in the land.

She received twelve months of beauty treatments and ate special food and had seven personal attendants looking after her every need.

She had special living quarters within the palace - of course she had clout and was able to bend other people's actions according to her will.

She had the luxury to think about others and their dilemmas. I don't have any of that stuff. I'm just a common Joe Blow trying to pay this month's bills.

I'm not popular.

I'm not talented.

I don't have model-like looks.

I've never even met anyone famous.

And who of us have enough money to get 12 hours of beauty treatments let alone twelve months!

And you're saying I can have an influence on somebody else's eternal destiny?

Oh Christian, how quickly we forget what happened to us the moment we believed – the instant we put our faith in God's Son, Jesus.

Remember Peter's words beginning in 1 Peter 1:3: *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us a **new birth into a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into **an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade** – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are **shielded by God's power** until the coming of the **salvation** that is ready to be revealed in the last time."*

I suppose it was an exciting and scary time to live during the Revolutionary war era when the American colonies were deciding whether or not they were going to remain loyal to England or choose to become a Patriot.

They also knew it was an extremely dangerous decision because people were going to die based on the decision – lives were going to be turned upside down, and never again be the same, but they knew they had to make a choice.

We have to make a choice – and truly we have to make the choice every day.

Will we live for ourselves and serve the world for its temporary and fleeting joys or will we choose to live for God and his honor and glory for truth and righteousness and love?

It's both a tough choice and an easy choice.

On the one hand it's a tough one because we will be faced with the prospect of ridicule, loss of friendships, societal status, possible loss of

gainful employment and possessions. We'll be persecuted and may even have to expose our lives to persecution and trials.

But it's also an easy choice if we keep in mind what is in future store for us:

Basking in God's perfect and immeasurable glory for all eternity and the joyful bliss that it encompasses.

Knowing that we are on the side of goodness and truth.

Realizing that we made an eternal difference in other people's lives who've come to know the Lord

Knowing that we are part of God's perfect will that seeks to reconcile mankind to His Creator through faith in Christ.

Being a child of God and knowing the love and forgiveness of the Father.

In the Bible we read about some great beginnings, don't we?

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and he created man and woman and placed them in the garden so they could fellowship with them.

Later on, God rebooted and started the human race over again with Noah and his family because he found Noah to be righteous even when the human race had gone severely astray.

This happened all in the book of Genesis and now in Genesis 12 we read about Abraham, and God's promise and plan to birth a nation through him. Another new beginning.

And how did this all happen?

Well, it's all quite simple really. **God called Abraham to a life of faith** – to leave behind that which was so familiar and comfortable and convenient and go to a new land sight unseen –

To leave his parents, his pagan culture, and look to the one true living God. This takes faith. This is faith!

**He also called Abram to live a life of fruitfulness!**

*“I will make you into a great nation.” “I will bless you.”*

*“I will make your name great” “and you will be a blessing to the nations.”*

How could Abram do any of this if he wasn't going to be fruitful?

God has called us to be fruitful – spiritually fruitful as Paul prays in Colossians: *“We pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.”*

Finally, God calls us to be his friend.

And we know this not only because he was Abram's friend, but because He gave his most precious gift to us – His Son.

And Jesus tells us that *“greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”* John 15:13

So don't think you've missed out on the best of what this country has to offer. Today and tomorrow are so chock full of opportunities to live a life of faith and fruitfulness and friendship with God.

The opportunities are limitless and stretch out before us further than our eyes can see and then still further, because when we're in Christ, eternity becomes our destiny.

So, our lives founded in Christ by His grace and our faith is just the beginning. Amen.