

SECOND MIDWEEK ADVENT SERVICE – DECEMBER 7, 2011

St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

A GREAT AND BLESSED NATION – GENESIS 12:2-3

During this year we have seen nation after nation experience uprisings. Established governments of monarchs and dictators have been overthrown and now the people are electing democratic governments to take over and rule them. Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have gone through revolts. Syria is experiencing great turmoil and discontent. The nations of the Euro-market have also been experiencing great stress and economic problems – Greece, Italy, Portugal, France and Germany. We have been reminded of how important it is to have a strong economic and political nation. Our own country is experiencing some of the same economic problems that are bringing these other nations to their knees and to internal dissension and revolution.

Today as we continue our study of the promises that our God made regarding the coming of our Savior Jesus, we hear the God of heaven and earth make a promise to Abram. The Lord promises Abram **A GREAT AND BLESSED NATION**. As we hear the Lord make this wonderful and life changing promise to Abram we see that **I) This is a Nation Established by the Lord** and **II) This is a Nation Blessed by the Lord**.

THIS IS A NATION ESTABLISHED BY THE LORD

There have been many nations that have been established throughout the history of the world. There was the Greek Empire, the Roman Empire, the Chinese Dynasties, the British Empire, the Spanish Empire and hundreds of others. As you read the pages of history you are amazed at how many different nations have come and they have gone.

The nation that God establishes starts out rather small and insignificant. At the time of our reading it is about twenty-one hundred years before the birth of Jesus. God comes to a cattleman living in southern Turkey. The man's name is Abram and his wife is Sarai. They are 75 and 65 years old. They have no children. God says to Abram, "I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing" (v. 2) What would you think? You are 75 years old, your wife is 65 and she is beyond the age of having children and you are told that you are going to become a great nation and your descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Impossible! However, with God all things are possible. Abram believed God. He packed up his belongings and he moved south to the land of Canaan. He became a nomad. He owned no property. He had no children and yet he believed what God had told him would happen. Twenty five years pass and nothing happens. During that time Abram and Sarai try out a few things to help God along. When they still don't have any children, Sarai gives her Egyptian servant, Hagar, as a wife to Abram. He and Hagar have a son, Ishmael. This however is not the child of the promise. Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born. Finally, when Abram is 100 years old and Sarai is 90 they conceive and Sarai bears a son, Isaac. He is the promised child. He is the one through whom God will eventually bring the one who will be blessing for all the families of the earth. Isaac has two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob in turn has 12 sons, the 12 tribes of Israel. The nation of Israel is part of the fulfillment of the promise of God.

This promise however is fulfilled in an even greater way. From the nation of Israel eventually comes the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is the Savior of all people. Jesus establishes a nation that still exists to this day. We know that nation as the Holy Christian Church. Everyone who trust and relies on Jesus for forgiveness and pardon for their sins is a citizen of this nation. A wonderful truth concerning this kingdom or nation is that it will endure forever. Abram is a citizen of that nation and you and I are also citizens of the kingdom of God. That spans a period of over 4,000 years.

THIS IS A NATION BLESSED BY THE LORD

God not only promises Abram that he will make him into a great nation, but he also promises him great and wonderful blessings. The Lord promised, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse; and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you." (v. 3) Those who lived in peace and harmony with Abraham and his descendants were blessed. But those who cursed the children of Israel, they were cursed. Think of the Egyptians. The king of Egypt refused to free the Israelites from their captivity in Egypt. He finally was drowned in the Red Sea along with his army as they pursued the children of God and attempted to bring them back to Egypt. Think of the Canaanites who fought against the people of Israel and the Lord defeated them. Think of how Haman tried to have King Xerxes annihilate the Jews and the Lord protected his people and Hamann was hanged. As you read the history of the Jews you see this promise of God to curse those who cursed his people fulfilled time and time again. You also see where nations and people blessed the Israelites, helped them and protected them and the Lord helped and protected those who had helped his people.

When it comes to the kingdom of Christ, the Holy Christian Church, we see how this promise continues to be kept. The Roman Empire attempted to squash the Christian Church. Where is that Empire today? It has disappeared from the face of the earth. Atheistic and Communistic Russia attempted to destroy the Christian church from their country. Russia has fallen and Christian missionaries are being sent to this country and the kingdom of Christ is adding more citizens to his nation.

Today as the opposition to Jesus and his church is more open and hostile it is good for us to remember this promise of our God, "whoever curses you, I will curse." God has done this in the past and he will continue to do this until the end of time. He will protect and keep his nation safe and blessed.

Of course the greatest blessing we have as members of the kingdom of God is our Savior Jesus. Jesus has brought untold blessings to each of us. We have the blessing of peace. We live with the peace of forgiveness. No matter how many times we wander, stray and foul up our lives, our Savior Jesus continues to reach out to us and tell us, "I love you. I forgive you. I died for all of your sins. You are precious and special to me because you are a citizen of my kingdom." The relationship which we had with our God that had been broken is now restored. We didn't patch up the problem, Jesus did. He healed the breach by his holy life and by enduring the torments of hell for every one of us. We have the peace of eternal life. We know that we are going to live forever with our Lord in the kingdom that he has prepared for us. We know that even our physical death is temporary and that we will rise alive with a perfect body and soul reunited on the last day at the resurrection of all the dead.

What a blessing to be a citizen of the nation that our God has established. What wonderful blessings we have because our citizenship is in heaven.

As we look at all the earthly nations around us and see the great trials and troubles that they are experiencing; as we see nation after nation fall, we know that the Lord will protect us his people and his nation. In the end the final nation standing will be the church of Jesus Christ. For the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

God keeps his promises. He kept his promise to Abraham and made him a great nation. He kept his promise to provide someone who is a blessing for all the families of this world, Jesus Christ.

Amen.