Weekly Bible Study
group – November 12, 2008

This week’s reading assignment: Genesis 18-19

In this week’s reading from Genesis, we come to a tricky passage. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Or more specifically, the story of God wanting to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and Abraham stepping in to plead with God for the salvation of the cities. This is a tricky passage for a number of reasons, and it deserves to be read many times and prayerfully pondered (please do!). It’s tricky because we see God wanting to destroy whole cities, we see Abraham boldly arguing with God, and we find that in the end all of the pleading comes to an end and the cities get destroyed anyway.

This passage raises a lot of deep questions that we need to sit with for a while. Without providing too many quick answers to those questions, let me suggest that we focus on just one aspect of the story for now: the role that Abraham plays in this drama. Remember that Abraham’s divine mission is supposed to result in “all the peoples of the earth being blessed.” Does that even include a wicked city like Sodom? Maybe so. In this example, we don’t see Abraham condemning the cities or calling down the fire of heaven...we actually see the opposite. Even though these are corrupt places, Abraham is bold enough to stand before God and argue for the cities to be saved.

Just a thought, but maybe this tells us something about our own role as “God’s people” here and now? Who are we called to advocate for? Whose lives will be spared because we took our calling seriously?

1) Read Genesis 18:17. Why do you think God asks himself this question?

2) What is the great sin of Sodom and Gomorrah that caused their destruction? Compare Genesis 18-19 with the prophet’s explanation in Ezekiel 16.

3) In Genesis 12, when Abraham was first called apart to become a new nation, he was given a mission that included being “a blessing to all the peoples of the earth.” In this week’s story, do we see Abraham succeeding or failing in that mission?

Have a good week,

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