Over the past 50 years and more, thousands of people have done it. They pulled up stakes and came to the Last Frontier. Some came all by themselves, some as newlyweds, some in families. Some came for an adventure or a challenge, and some for the hunting, fishing, mountain climbing, skiing, etc. Some came with a job guaranteed when they got here, others with nothing but the hope that they’d find a job when they got here.

They all left things behind -- the place they’d called home, friends, extended family and, often, immediate family. Most left all that behind because of what they hoped to find here. They left a comfortable, known existence for the unknown, because they were hoping for something better.

Some might say that it took “a leap of faith” to do that. When people use that expression, usually they mean that you're hoping for something good without anything solid on which to base your hope. But you act on it anyway...hoping the good thing will happen. You kind of take a shot in the dark.

Some even call it “a blind leap in the dark,” and many think that’s what faith is. True or not true? Is our faith a blind leap in the dark? When the LORD tells Abram or me or you to do something, he does not expect “a blind leap in the dark”!

Sometimes we act like that’s what he’s asking of us. For example, God tells us to trust him in everything and for everything. OK, fine, but then, when the doctors can’t seem to get rid of my pain, or we don’t know how we’re going to provide for another child, or you can’t see how you’re going to survive this potential disaster or how you'll ever get what you want in life… that’s when our trust weakens or maybe fails. When we can't see a good solution, instead of trusting him we take matters into our own hands. We seek our own ways to solve our problems, only they are sinful solutions. We end up disobeying God.

Well, the LORD was not demanding a blind leap from Abram. His command was not the end of the communication. He followed it up with no less than seven promises. Each one was huge, and the last one towered over all the others. In fact, without the last promise, there was no point to the first six. That last one gave meaning and purpose to all the others.

So, to the 75-year-old married to a barren 65-year-old, Yahweh said (1): “I will make you into a great nation.” Abram had no son to carry on the family name, but that was going to change. The LORD would make him the father of a nation great in numbers and in multiple other ways. (2) “And I will bless you,” he promised. He would make sure that things would go very well for Abram. And (3) “I will make your name great,” he said. Abram would be forever famous.

(4) “And you will be a blessing,” the LORD told him, promising that by his actions, Abram would bring
blessings to others. On top of that, (5) God himself would do good things to those who spoke well of Abram. And as for those who cursed Abram, well, let's just say that the LORD would take that personally (6).

The fulfillment of these promises lay in the future, of course, some fulfillments far in the future. But that did not mean he had to take a blind leap. True, it took faith to do what he did, but not a leap of faith. It took a heap of faith to obey the command and get up and go. But Abram had something solid on which to rest that faith. He had the one thing that produces faith, the Word of the living God.

He had no less than seven promises, and the last one was the biggest and best: “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Again, that one gave meaning to the others. It explained why God was going to do those other six things. There is only one way to understand promise #7. It’s the promise of the Savior -- a Savior from Abram’s family, a Savior for Abram and his family, a Savior for all the nations of the earth. Later in Ch. 22, the LORD repeated it: “Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.”

Certainly, the LORD’s command demanded a lot. Abram was to pull up stakes, leave home and family and set out for an unspecified destination. That demanded personal sacrifices. It also demanded trust in the One who gave the command. It took faith -- not a leap but a heap of faith!

Martin Luther commented about faith: “Faith does not float on top of the heart like a duck on water or foam on beer.” Faith, real trust in God, fills the heart and produces a response, a willing obedience. It did! Moses tells us, “So Abram left, as the LORD had told him.” He pulled up stakes and packed up Sarai and all their possessions and people, and set out for Canaan. That much he knew -- to head in the direction of Canaan.

When he got to the middle of the land, the LORD appeared again and welcomed him with another promise: “To your offspring I will give this land.” In other words, "You're here!" Abram built an altar and worshiped. Then he moved on, built another altar and, as Moses literally wrote, “called out with the name of the LORD.” In this land of Canaanites, he not only worshiped publicly but also preached the name of the Savior-God of all people.

This was a huge step to for the man to take, a leap, some might say -- to trust the One who gave the command. But it was not a blind leap in the dark. It was not a leap of faith. What Abram had was a heap of faith! His faith rested on the Word and promises of God. That Word, those promises, produced faith, and in faith he got up and went.

Christians, that’s how it works for us, too. God also expects great things from you and me. He tells us to trust him in everything and for everything. Tells us to love him above everything, and to worship him and proclaim his name. He commands us to treat everyone around us with selfless love, to be kind, to have compassion, to forgive, to speak the truth in love, to be faithful stewards, and to deny self and take up our cross and follow.

I don't have to tell you, do I, that it takes a heap of faith to do those things! But that’s what we will have if we are tuned in, carefully and closely and constantly, to the Word of God. There we see how the LORD kept all his promises to Abram. There we learn how he kept the biggest one of all, and sent his own Son to save sinners. There we find God’s promise to forgive all our sins for Jesus’ sake. There we here his promise to pardon us fully and continually because Christ has paid our debt in full for us. There we have God's own promise to welcome us finally to the real Promised Land, our eternal home!

Our Savior-God has also promised to be with us and to love us, to protect us and provide for us, ever to make all things work together for our good. He has given us so many great and precious promises! And just like the promises he gave Abram, they’re all connected to our dear Savior, to his cross and to his empty grave.

By his Word and promises, our Savior-God gives us faith. It’s faith that does not float on top of the heart like foam on beer. It fills our hearts with trust in our God. From that trust flows willing and joyful obedience. And, just like Abram, we get up and do whatever our God tells us to do! Amen.