

Letting Lot choose first

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Preacher: Rob Attridge

[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. So nice to see you all this morning. Well, this morning we are continuing our series in the book of Genesis.

So we're going to pick up from where Andrew left off last week. So that means this morning we are coming to Genesis chapter 13. Now we're going to look at the whole chapter.

We're going to look at verses 1 to 18. So let's look at this passage together. Genesis chapter 13 verses 1 to 18.

So Abraham went up from Egypt to the Negev with his wife and everything he had. And Lot went with him. Abraham had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel. To the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier. And where he had first built an altar.

[1 : 05] There Abraham called on the name of the Lord. Now Lot was moving about with Abraham. He also had flocks, herds and tents.

But the land could not support them while they stayed together for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. And quarreling arose between Abraham's herders and Lot's.

The Canaanites and the Perizzites were also living in the land at the time. So Abraham said to Lot, Let's not have any quarreling between you and me or between your herders or mine.

For we are close relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right. If you go to the right, I'll go to the left.

Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan towards Zor was well watered like the garden of the Lord. Like the land of Egypt.

[2 : 07] This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan. And set out towards the east.

The two men parted company. Abraham lived in the land of Canaan. While Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.

The Lord said to Abraham, after Lot had parted from him, Look around from where you are to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.

I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.

So Abraham went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the Lord.

[3 : 14] Lord, I pray that you would use this passage this morning to encourage our hearts. As we look at it together, Lord, I pray you would use it to encourage our hearts and to bring us on.

And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, recently I was somewhere, about a month ago, and there was two slices of apple pie left on the table.

Now, just as a side note, I love apple pie. And I love apple pie served cold. We had a debate about this at our men's gathering a few weeks ago, and there were some people who liked the apple pie hot, some liked it cold.

I believe apple pie should be served cold. But anyway, that's another story. But I like apple pie. So I was at this place, and there was two slices of apple pie left on the table.

And there was two of us who approached this table at the same time looking for apple pie. Well, that was all grand, except we had one big problem.

[4 : 19] Someone had cut the apple pie in a very, very, very wonky way, meaning that one of those slices was very, very small, and the other slice was very, very big.

So I don't know about you, but as I'm looking at these two slices, I'm thinking, I want the big one. You know, I'm looking at these two slices, and I'm thinking, you know, that big one, that's got its name, that's got my name written all over it, and I want it.

I mean, the other person probably doesn't even like apple pie that much anyway. But then I thought, well, I can't just take the big slice. I better let the other person pick first and kind of hope for the best. But with even something as small as an apple pie, I think for us as people, if there's a feeling somehow that we might miss out on something, it can at times be very, very difficult to let others pick first.

It can be very, very difficult to let others choose first. Well, on a much, much larger scale than a slice of apple pie, we see in these verses that Abraham left others choose first.

[5 : 42] We see in these verses that Abraham left Lot choose first. And it was not a small thing in any way that Abraham left Lot choose first on.

We know from our reading that basically Abraham and Lot had become so big, there wasn't room for both of them to stay together, their herdsmen were starting to get on each other's nerves.

Basically, some space was needed. Well, Abraham, not wanting all of this to kind of spill over and not wanting to fall out with his close relative Lot, suggested that they would both take some land and basically go on their own way and get some space.

But incredibly, Abraham, the older of the two, the senior of the two, suggested that Lot should pick first.

And you know, this really is incredible. As they looked out over the land, Abraham suggested that Lot should take his pick first and then Abraham and his people would take whatever was left.

[7 : 01] I mean, if you think about it, this is far bigger than a slice of apple pie. So what a big thing Abraham did here. This is a massive thing to allow Lot to choose first on.

I mean, if Lot took the good land, well then for Abraham and his family, moving forward, taking the poorer land, well then, you know, their life would be a little bit harder as they worked the poorer land.

Their life would be a little bit more challenging. And we get the sense from this passage, I think when we look at it, that all of the land was not the same here.

We see here in verse 10 that the Jordan Valley is described as being especially well watered like the garden of the Lord.

Now many people suggest that that's a reference to the Garden of Eden, that that's how well watered and lush and fertile and green this place was.

[8 : 07] So it seems like the Jordan Valley clearly stood out to be an excellent piece of land compared to anywhere else.

Maybe like Durris. But this, I'm joking, this was a massive thing for Abraham to allow Lot to do.

All the land here was not the same. Now granted, Lot was his close relative, but still this was a big thing for Abraham to do. Just imagine putting yourself in Abraham's shoes.

Imagine if later today, you and someone else were brought to the top of Mount Gabriel. And imagine if you're up on Mount Gabriel and you're looking down on two peninsulas and you're to take one peninsula each.

And imagine if you were looking down on these two peninsulas and one peninsula was so much greener and flatter and better than the other.

[9 : 09] If truth be told, how many of us would be saying to the other person, well, you know, you go ahead there now and you pick first. I'll just take a seat and I'll take whatever is left for me and my family.

If truth be told, if really truth be told, that would be a very, very difficult thing for us to do or for anyone to do. But that is what Abraham did here.

And I think in doing so, Abraham displayed several positive attitudes. In letting Lot choose first, Abraham displayed, I think, an attitude of trusting the Lord, an attitude of putting others first, and an attitude of being content with whatever the Lord allowed him to have in the end.

Well, these are attitudes, I think, that the Lord has encouraged his people to have right throughout Scripture.

Just to give a few examples, in terms of trusting the Lord, well, that's everywhere in Scripture. But just one example, the Lord Jesus said in John 14, 1, trust in God, trust also in me.

[10:32] In terms of putting others first, the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 2, 3, do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.

And in terms of being content with what we have, the writer of the Hebrews tells us, in Hebrews 13, 15, to keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.

Because God has said, never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. These attitudes are God's way for his people to live as his people in this world.

These are Christ-like attitudes. And Abraham here, he displayed these things in letting Lot choose first. He trusted the Lord with this decision.

In many ways, he left this decision in the Lord's hands. He put Lot before himself and he was content with what was left. Abraham displayed these things in letting Lot choose first.

[11:46] But we see in verses 10 and 11 that Lot chose the Jordan Valley. I mean, of course he did.

You know, he chose the land that was well watered. He chose the land that was watered like the garden of the Lord. He saw the green grass and he went for it. And we see in verse 12 that Abraham was therefore left to set up camp in the land of Canaan.

Now this land probably was okay, but it definitely wasn't as good, I think, the sense we get from this passage as the Jordan Valley. So how did all of this work out?

Well, very simply, with Lot choosing the best land for himself, it led him to Sodom. And verse 13 tells us that that was a place full of sin and wickedness against the Lord.

And this only led to heartache and this only led to challenge. Did Lot know what was happening in Sodom when he picked the land?

[12:57] Well, maybe he did. Maybe he didn't. But nevertheless, when we look at his decision, it did lead him to Sodom. And that only led to heartache and trouble and challenge.

But with Abraham trusting the Lord with an attitude of putting people before possessions, with an attitude of putting people before himself, with an attitude of being content with whatever the Lord would allow, we have to say that this led to blessing.

Because after Lot picked his land in verses 14 to 17, the Lord reaffirmed his promise and his blessing to Abraham.

The Lord reaffirmed that he would make him into a great nation. Here's Abraham letting someone else pick the best land that would be most productive. But the Lord is reaffirming his promise to Abraham that he will make him into a great nation.

Abraham trusted the Lord. He put others first. And he was content with what the Lord allowed him to have.

[14:11] And this led to blessing. Maybe not financial blessing straight away. Maybe not physical blessing. But it would lead to blessing.

And just with that in mind, with the Lord's help, let us be a people who trust the Lord. With the Lord's help, let us be a people who put others before ourselves.

And with the Lord's help, let us be content in the mix of all of that with what the Lord allows us to have. Because these are God's ways.

things. And these things will lead to blessing. For us, maybe that might not be financial blessing. Maybe it might not be physical blessing.

But these things will lead to spiritual blessing in that the Lord will honor these things. He will honor these things.

[15:14] So let's, with the Lord's help, take these things on board as we, as we seek to live as these people in this world. Let us seek to take these, these attitudes on board with his help as we seek to live as these people in this world.

well, just looking at this passage, as we seek to take these things on board, let us also take on board the goodness of God in this passage.

You know, these attitudes, they're, they're so important for us to remember. They're so important to take on board. But as we take these things on board, let us also remember the goodness of God to Abraham and his family in this passage.

Just thinking about a little bit what Andrew was saying last week, after everything that happened in Egypt when, when Pharaoh met Abraham and Abraham basically lied about his wife, he said that

his wife was his sister and then he gave his wife to Pharaoh.

After all of that in Egypt, we really see the goodness of God to Abraham in that the Lord did not, first of all, cast Abraham aside.

[16:38] I mean, for what Abraham did in Egypt, he lied, he was deceptive, the Lord could have easily cast Abraham aside. But no, by the goodness of God, the Lord did not cast Abraham aside.

to add to that, after what Abraham did in Egypt, we see the goodness of God to Abraham in that Pharaoh didn't kill Abraham for his lies and his deception.

I mean, Pharaoh could have easily have killed Abraham for lying to him, but by the goodness and grace of God, Pharaoh didn't kill Abraham.

And to add to that again, considering what Abraham did in Egypt, we see the goodness of God to Abraham and that Pharaoh gave Abraham his wife back.

I mean, Pharaoh could have easily have kept Sarah. He would have had the power to do that, but by the goodness of God, even though Abraham lied to Pharaoh, Pharaoh gave him his wife back.

[17:54] And then to add to that again, considering what Abraham did in Egypt, we see the goodness of God to Abraham in that Abraham left Egypt with a lot of possessions and a lot of different things.

He was in good shape that he was able to look after his people. We see the goodness of God to Abraham in that the Lord brought him out of Egypt despite his lies in good shape.

And then again, we see the goodness of God to Abraham in this passage in that with Lot's choice, Abraham was protected from Sodom.

In the Lord's sovereignty, however that all worked out, Lot chose the good land and that protected Abraham from Sodom.

we see the goodness of God right throughout these chapters to Abraham. We see the goodness of God to Abraham right throughout his life.

[18:59] And here is the big thing. Clearly, it is not because Abraham was so great that the Lord showed his goodness and his grace to him.

It was not because Abraham was so great that the Lord showed his goodness to him. No, God showed his goodness to Abraham because God is always faithful and gracious to his people despite their failures and their mistakes.

We see this just on full display, I think, in this passage. We see in this passage despite Abraham's sin, despite his lies, despite his weaknesses, the Lord was going to keep his promise to Abraham and he was never going to cast him aside.

God's goodness and grace followed Abraham all the days of his life, not because Abraham was so great, no, it was simply because Abraham belonged to the Lord.

That's what it's all about. Abraham was a child of God and as a child of God it would not always be easy. Sometimes the Lord will allow us to make mistakes, to teach us for our good, but ultimately through that, as a child of God, we will know the Lord's goodness and grace all the days of our life because we belong to him.

[20:39] Because we belong to the Lord, because we are his precious children, it won't always be easy, but we will know his goodness and his grace all the days of our life.

Just like it was with Abraham, despite our failures, despite our mistakes, because we are his, we will know his goodness and grace all the days of our life.

It won't always be easy. As I said, sometimes we will be allowed to make mistakes, but because we are his, he will never cast us aside.

That is a guarantee because we are his. Because we are his, he will finish the work that he has started in us. Because we are his, by his goodness and grace, he will fulfill every promise to us and he will bring us home.

You know, there's one line of amazing grace, it's my favorite line in amazing grace and it's, it was grace that brought us safe thus far and grace will lead us home.

[21:48] Despite Abraham's weaknesses, despite his, his mistakes, it was grace, it was God's goodness and grace that brought Abraham to this point in Genesis chapter 13 and it was God's grace that brought him home.

And I just want to say this morning that the, the same is true for every single one of us, despite our mistakes, despite our failures, it's God's goodness and grace that has brought us safe thus far and it will be God's goodness and grace that will bring us home.

Because it's not based on us being brought home. We will be brought home because it's based on God's goodness and grace bringing us there.

So this morning as we, as we seek, yes, to take these attitudes on board and as we, as we seek, seek to live as these people in this world, let us take these things on board with his help.

But ultimately at the end of the day, let us be encouraged that just like it was for Abraham, it'll be God's goodness and grace that will bring us on, bring us through and bring us home.

[23 : 11] Not because we are great, not because of his great goodness and grace for all who are his and that includes all of us who believe.

We will be brought home. I just want to close with one line from, from Psalm 23 and here David is, is speaking about the Lord and he said in verse 6, surely, certainly, your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

You know, as believers, at the end of the day, you know, we, with the Lord's help, will grow in these attitudes and we'll become more Christ-like bit by bit as he transforms us into his likeness.

but at the end of the day, that is our story as his people. We will know his goodness and grace all the days of our life and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

It won't always be easy. Sometimes we'll be allowed to make mistakes but we will know his goodness and grace all the days of our life and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever because it's not based on us.

[24 : 41] It's based on him, what he's done for us, the finished work on the cross and it's almost hard to think about it but it's done and it's finished and we'll know his goodness and grace.

Let's sing together. Let's sing these words. I love you, Lord, for your mercy never fails me. All my days I've been held in your hands from the moment that I wake up until I lay my head.

Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God. And all my life you have been faithful and all my life you have been so, so good with every breath that I am able.

Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God. Let's worship our Lord together and let's thank him that we will know his goodness all the days of our life and we will be with him all the days of our life.

Let's worship our Lord together.