

Living in the Real World

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[0 : 00] Father, we ask that your... Well, Father, we give you thanks and praise for your common grace given to human beings, whereby we, even the worst of us, manage to more or less live in the real world most of the time.

But, Father, you know how deeply we end up choosing pride and self-centeredness and vanity and other types of things that blind us to what we really are like and who we really are and what the world is really like.

And, Father, you know that we're usually unconscious of this in ourselves, even as we don't like it in others. We ask, Father, that in your kindness that you would pour out the Holy Spirit upon us with might and power and deep conviction, that your word would come into our heart, your gospel would come into our heart, that you would help us to see who we really are in light of your existence and in light of the gospel, and in seeing who we are, that we would love the person and work of Jesus even more and that we would, Father, allow your Holy Spirit to help us live in the real world where you are the creator and sovereign over all things.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So I changed the introduction to my sermon slightly because of what I was thinking about while I was driving in.

I think it's the case that five or ten years ago, so sometimes I think to myself, what could you say to a Canadian to insult them? I mean, I managed to insult people without thinking about it far too often, but if you actually wanted to insult a Canadian, what were some of the ways that you could insult an average Canadian and probably an average American?

[1 : 45] And I think five or ten years ago, a comment, if you were to say to a Canadian that they do not live in the real world, that they're not living in the real world, that that would be an insult to them.

But I'm not sure if it would still be an insult to a lot of Canadians, to tell you the truth. I was thinking about it while I was driving in. Now, you know, by the way, to say that you're not living in the real world, that doesn't mean, like in the real world, it doesn't mean that there's not imagination or whimsy or playfulness or hope.

But today, the idea that what matters is my reality, what matters is my reality, that's such a powerful idea for a large number of people in our culture.

I don't know if it would actually be an insult to them if you said to them that they're not living in the real world. They might say, who cares about the real world? What matters is my reality. I don't know, you can talk about it over coffee, whether, in fact, that's a thing, and whether, in fact, even for people who would very highly insist on the fact that what matters isn't whatever reality is, is my reality was what really, really matters.

The fact of the matter is, is if I'm right that there are now, that that wouldn't actually be an insult to a lot of Canadians. Christianity very clearly comes down to on one side of that particular issue.

[3 : 07] I mean, it might be a surprise. There was a long op-ed piece in the National Post a week or so ago, two Saturdays ago, sort of perpetuating this idea that people like Christians are opposed to reason and science and knowledge and all of that type of stuff.

It was a remarkably uninformed piece written by a retired university president. But it might be a surprise to people to know that Christianity comes down very, very firmly and clearly on this side, that people should want to know what the real world is and that we should want to try to live in the real world and deal with the real world.

And so today we're going to look at a very, very interesting story. And the first part of the story is one of those stories, I'll just be very honest, when I'm doing my devotions, probably when I come to a story like this, it's the first 10 verses have the names of nine kings, all of them unpronounceable

names, all unpronounceable people groups, all things that you don't have any idea really who they are other than the odd word.

And I'll just be honest, if I was reading this in my devotions, I'd sort of yada, yada, yada, yada, yada. And by the time I actually got to the stuff which is sort of just easy to follow, I'd gotten so accustomed to not really paying attention, I might miss it.

But it's a very, very simple story and very powerful story that portrays two different ways to live, living in the real world and living not in the real world.

[4 : 37] Because the fact of the matter is, is that even for those of us and those Canadians who desire to want to live in the real world, we would acknowledge that it can sometimes be very hard to live in the real world because there are things which are impediments to living in the real world.

And so this is a very interesting story that speaks directly to this particular issue. So we're going to look at it. But now before I tell you to turn in your Bibles, well here, actually, I'll just give you a sample.

This is how Genesis 14 begins. It's not going to be on the screen. In the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar, Ariarch, king of Elessar, Chedilo, Omer, king of...

Okay, you're already gone to sleep, right? You got my... So here's what's going to go. If you just put up Claire on the screen, I paid thousands of dollars for this map, just the licensing arrangements. I wrote this myself. Probably all of you can gather that. And all of you will be saying, George, don't quit your day job. But simply put, this map sort of helps you to understand what the first part of Genesis 14 is saying.

[5 : 44] And then we're going to turn to Genesis 11 to pick up the story. And so basically what's talking about is there's a group of four kings and they're all from a people group called Mesopotamia.

And that's at the very top of the map. And Mesopotamia, in a sense, is off the map. At the day we would know it as Turkey, Iraq, Iran, those countries sort of in that region of what we now call Iran, what we now call Iraq, what we call Turkey, that would, in the time of this history, would have been known as Mesopotamia.

And that's a different people group, a very ancient civilizations there. And if you sort of look down, there's a reddish circle with five X's. Those are five city-states.

And sort of basically, most of the things you see in the map are what we would call Canaanites. But these five kings are the five kings that are mentioned. That's sort of the area that they ruled.

And what's going on here is something as old as the hills and as modern as the daily news. The empire, or the kings, of Mesopotamia, 14 years prior, have subjugated probably the area just to the right of that line, which is supposed to be the Jordan River, including subjugating that area with the five X's, the five Canaanite kings.

[7 : 05] They've subjugated it. And so the people in that area, in the red circle, they have to be paying tribute to the people up in Mesopotamia, different people group. And then after they've been doing that for 12 years, once again, this is just like the modern news.

They say, we're going to stop paying money for that. You know, they're far away. We can take them. We can kick their butt if they come back down here. You know, lots of chest thumping and all of that type of stuff.

And so they stop paying any money. It takes a year for them to figure it out because back then they didn't have CNN. They didn't have Fox News. They didn't have BBC World Report or Twitter or Instagram. So it took them a year to figure that out.

Takes them a while to get their army to come down. And the guys up in Mesopotamia said, we're going to recover that area because we like getting tribute and we like being in power and we like being in control, just like the news today, right?

So what they do is that long orange line. They don't actually directly attack the Canaanite kings first. What they do is go slightly to the east of them, which is right for you folks.

[8 : 08] And they go and then what you see in the first part of Genesis 14 is they conquer, they plunder and pillage and war and defeat a whole pile of people groups and tribal groups all the way down that orange line, all the way to the south, almost to Egypt.

And then they decide they're going to start heading up because now they're going to go after the five guys that they'd previously conquered that were now trying to flex their muscles and say they could just ignore the people from Mesopotamia.

And hopefully you can see there, I say battle, hopefully you can see that. The five kings, they move sort of down to meet the oncoming Mesopotamian kings. They fight a big battle, right?

Where I say battle. And as we're going to see in a moment, the five kings, they get their butts kicked. They get very, very clearly defeated. In fact, there's even a thing, they talk about the tar pits being there and even the natural environment that I guess the kings had hoped would work in their advantage actually works to their disadvantage.

People die in those pits. The kings flee. I'm sort of jumping ahead a little bit for a couple of verses. What I don't show you here because I couldn't figure out how to draw it is the kings from Mesopotamia, then they go and they basically sack, pillage, and plunder those five Canaanite cities, states.

[9 : 29] But then rather than going all up on north, right there, they sort of loop around and go back on the other side, the left-hand side of that line, the Jordan River, and they start heading back to Mesopotamia.

They'd obviously be moving slow because they have lots of plunder, lots of treasure, lots of slaves. Either people they're going to keep as slaves or something that they would have done back in those days.

If you found a rich person, you would take them away and hope that you could have them, sell them back for ransom to their family. So that's what they're all doing. They've won the battle. They're heading back.

You can see the green line is where Abram lives, is at the bottom. And as you're going to see in a moment, he's going to go back up and there's going to be a battle and that's sort of what's going on in the story without all the names.

So now let's look at the text. Sorry, that was a long, but one of the interesting things about it is once you sort of get over the problems with the names is, as I said, I mean, this is the Russian Ukraine.

[10 : 28] This is China and Taiwan. This is what's going on in Afghanistan. It's what's going on in the failed states of Northern Africa and the failed states of the Middle East.

That's what's going on. There's people, warlords, who claim authority over others. They're willing to go to war and fight over it and exercise their power and authority. So this is a very, very ancient problem and it's a very, very contemporary problem.

It's always been present. It was present here amongst the First Nations people groups that were here before those from Europe discovered it. The First Nations tribes fought battles against each other, took plunder, took slaves.

It's a part of common human history. And so what happens now? Well, what happens now? Let's begin reading at verse 11 and we'll sort of recap some of that there.

Verse 11. So the enemy, that is the Mesopotamians, took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their provisions and went their way.

[11 : 33] They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom and his possessions and went their way. So in the last story, we see that Lot had separated from Abram and lived near Sodom.

Now we discover that he'd gone from living near Sodom to living in Sodom. And that's going to be important. There's going to be two whole chapters taken up later with the whole issue of Sodom and Gomorrah. And for many of you, whether you're watching this and you have very little Christian background, you've probably heard of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And we're going to be looking at in a couple of weeks. But that's what happened. So now here's the sort of the question. I've given it away a little bit. But what's Abram going to do if he finds out about it?

Well, let's look. Verse 13. Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who is living by the oaks of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eschol and Aner.

These were allies of Abram. So what's Abram now finds out that his nephew Lot's been captured. Now what's going to happen here? Now, here's one of the things about this story.

[12 : 45] If you go back and you look at chapter 12 in particular, but also chapter 13, you'll see that Abram has been promised, has been blessed by God. Abram has been promised that his offspring, that he will produce a mighty nation, not that he will produce a mighty nation, not Lot.

He, it will come from, in a sense, him and Sarah will be the source of new life that will create many, many, many descendants and that they will eventually completely and utterly possess the land.

And that blessing has been promised in chapter 12 and in chapter 13. It's just going to be his offspring. And as well as that, Lot had already separated from Abram and taken the best land. And now he's sort of screwed up and he's captured by the forces of Mesopotamia. So what's Abram going to do? Now, one of the, how can I put it?

Not stereotypes. One of the concerns that people have, Canadians have, when they hear about Christianity, this idea that if I give my life to Christ, if I accept Christ as my Savior and Lord, that I'm going to go to heaven, that, you know, he's done everything that has to be done for me to make me right with God, there's sort of the idea, and it's also sort of common with it, because there's a very similar type of idea here.

[14:12] I just, Abram hasn't done anything to deserve this blessing. He's not particularly special. God just gives it to him.

And there's a very, very common idea that this idea is going to produce arrogance and indifference, and maybe even violence. I mean, Abram's been promised by God, the triune God, that he's going to have all these things happen to him, the land's going to all have him.

Like, how can that not, people will think, how can that not create within the mind of the people who hear that a type of arrogance and a type of self-centeredness and an indifference to those who are outside of, in a sense, your tribe.

And, now, part of the problem when people think this is they sort of forget for a second that arrogance and indifference is a human problem.

Like, arrogance and indifference is a human problem. It's not as if just people who understand the Christian faith have a problem with arrogance and indifference and the rest of the world is free of it. No, the fact of the matter is is that arrogance and indifference is a human problem.

[15:28] It's common whether you're a Buddhist, an atheist, a Hindu, a Muslim, believe in some ancient religion. That really, the question is, does somehow or another these Christian ideas which are seen here, does it make it worse?

Or is, in fact, the case that there's something unique about this idea of blessing that's seen here in Abram and also seen in the Gospel that actually works against arrogance and indifference and violence?

So, what happens? Well, if we look here at verse, we've just heard that Abram has now heard about it. How is he going to react? He remembers the blessing, he remembers the grace, he remembers the promise, he's living at a place where he has an altar, and that means he can regularly go and worship the God who's pronounced these blessings over him.

He can be reminded of it, he can recommit to it, he can recommit to this God. So, what's Abram's response to hearing about the great destruction that's happened to these five pagan cities and the other areas, and the fact that his nephew Lot has been captured?

Well, we find out what his response is in verse 14. When Abram heard that his kinsmen had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men born in his house, 318 of them.

[17:02] Sort of curious. It's not 315 or 319, but 318. He took the 318 of them and he went in pursuit as far as Dan.

And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and he defeated the Mesopotamians. He defeats them. This same four kings who rule sort of a very large empire, who have defeated all the people groups to the east and all the way to the south and then defeated these five Canaanite kings and then they've got enough plunder, they've made their point with the Canaanite kings, they now have more area.

Abram defeats them. And not only does he defeat them, he pursues them to Hobah, north of Damascus. Then he brought back all the possessions and also brought back his kinsmen Lot with his possessions and the women and the people.

So once again, these Mesopotamian kings who plundered and looted all of these people groups, including Sodom and Gomorrah, Abram, with these three other allies of him, a far smaller force, were able to defeat the Mesopotamians and now they are taking a slow journey back with the animals that have been captured, the women and children and some of the men who've been captured, and they're bringing all of that back towards where Abram lives on the way to these people being able to be resettled in their Canaanite and pagan areas.

And you see, one of the things, if you just pause for a second, what you see in this story a little bit, we're going to get to the two different ways to live and whether you live in the real world or not, but the point of the blessing that you go back, if you read Genesis chapter 12, the verses 2 and 3, and

then you read verse 7, and you read how this blessing, this grace, is sort of reinforced and reenacted and deepened at the end of chapter 13, it's all completely, it's not something as a result of what Abram's accomplished.

[19 : 27] The blessing has no connection to his accomplishments, it's not earned, it's undeserved. And the fact of the matter is, is it's the particular nature of being blessed by God in a way which is unearned, undeserved, has nothing to do with your accomplishment, that as that becomes more real to you, as that becomes more real to me, it undermines both pride and religion.

You see, religion, all religion, all spirituality, is always based on us accomplishing something. If you're a Buddhist, you're going to accomplish one set of things, if you're a Hindu, you'll accomplish a different set of things, if you're a Muslim, you'll accomplish a different set of things, if you have your bespoke spirituality here in North America, you'll have your own set of things that you have to accomplish, but you accomplish certain types of things to make yourself right with God. And that will always coexist with pride. Because good grief, you've done it, haven't you? And it will often go against, it will often connect with not only pride, but image management and make-believe. Because in your heart of hearts, you know that you haven't accomplished as much as you think you have, you're not quite as good as you, you actually aren't really as good as you like people to think you are and you want to have God think you are.

So you become very concerned, even with whether you're conscious of it or not, with image management. And you sort of might even deceive yourself that you're far better than you actually are.

[21 : 09] But when you come across a blessing like this and the blessing of the gospel, which is very, very similar, in a sense, the blessing of Abraham is looking forward forward to this profound act of rescue that God will do in the person of his son, which is Jesus' death upon the cross.

As the truth of this blessing comes home to you, that I didn't earn it, I didn't accomplish it, I don't deserve it, and yet God has given this to me as a gift, that in fact begins to not only undermine pride, but it undermines religion.

One of the popular things that go on in our culture now to deal with our psychological and other problems is the practice of mindfulness. It's usually a Western adaptation of things come from Buddhism.

It's often tried to be taught now in different therapies, and at the heart of mindfulness, I mean, there's different aspects to it, but part of it is that you, in a sense, try to disconnect from yourself and get to a place where you can just observe yourself, observe the flow of what's going on, and maybe as you observe what's going on, you'll follow like some of Jordan Peterson's advice, not that he's specifically talking about mindfulness, but of being friendly towards yourself, of wishing the best for yourself, but you try to go to a place where you can just observe what's happening in your life from a place within you to just observe yourself, and watch the flow of what's going through you and your thoughts and your emotions and stuff like that.

But the big problem with it, I really became aware of this, believe it or not, by reading a non-Christian writer by the name of Peter Robinson, who talks about this several times in his book, where one of the characters in his book is a person who practices this, and Peter Robinson has his main sort of hero of the stories talk about the fact that she used that regularly to give herself a pass on the things that she had done to hurt people, to create excuses.

[23 : 29] See, the problem with it is that if yourself is still proud and prone to self-deception, then all you've done is created, in a sense, a place of pride to observe your life, a place to sort of separate the real you, the one who's observing from the you that does things, and it ends up actually, it doesn't end up really dealing with pride or selfishness or self-centeredness, it becomes a means by which you can sort of fool yourself about what's going on in your life, and your responsibility for what you've done.

You see, in a sense, what it's trying to do is it's trying to create a substitute for the biblical doctrine of grace. You see, what grace creates for us, if we understand that this blessing that's been promised in Genesis chapter 12, that I'm going to, you know, Abram, you don't deserve it, you don't merit it, you have an accomplished anything, I'm going to give my favor upon you, through you and through the seed, so to speak, the offspring that come from you, there will be some offspring that eventually develop, some means by which all of the world will be blessed, that people will bless themselves for you, I'm going to bless you so you're going to be a blessing, it's completely undeserved, and that's looking forward to this day down the road which is now past for us, Abram in

a sense is looking at it in faith in the future, we now remember it in the past, where when Jesus dies upon the cross for us, every wrong thing that I've ever done has been dealt with by him, and the life that I wasn't able to live, he lives for me, and when I put my hand in his, and trust him as my savior and lord, in a sense the life that I couldn't live but should have lived becomes mine, and the consequences of my bad actions, which if you add them all up I can't possibly pay for them, he pays the price of that, and I have this gift of righteousness and being right with

God that comes to me unmerited, undeserved, unearned, and it comes to me from the God who knows every single thing there is to know about me, he knows every dream I have at night that I don't remember, he knows every mask, every self deception, all the unreality, every single thing about me from the moment that I can make moral choices to the moment of my death, all of those are dealt with in the cross, and it's as that promise grasps you, that you begin to have a place where you can look at your life, and you can observe, gosh I was selfish yesterday, or gosh I was self-centered, or gosh I just don't want to really, gosh I'm prayerless, or gosh I'm taking credit for that, and I don't know where it came from that idea, I should really be giving, like it provides a place where we can actually look at ourselves in the security of God's grace and blessing, it can begin to, unlike mindfulness which can actually just create a type of self-flattering, grace can place, create a humble place, a humble place, not just a place, because you're not just by yourself, you're with him, you're with

Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit to observe who you really are, and respond then with repentance, or with gratitude, or with praise.

grace. Now, this story takes a sudden turn, I have to watch my time, this story takes a sudden turn, but it just ended here, I guess what I was just telling you, that would sort of be the end of the sermon, but it takes a very, very sudden turn, and it shows before us a deepening of what I've just tried to communicate to you, which is two different ways of living in the world.

[27 : 46] A world where it's pride-driven self-deception and self-centeredness, or a way of living which is in the real world, which acknowledges that God is the creator and possessor of all things, and that unless he bestows upon us grace and blessing, we can't really live.

What do I mean? Well, let's just look at it. Look at verse 17. So, Abram has defeated these with his 318 men and his three little allies.

They've defeated the Mesopotamian kings that have defeated multiple people groups and these five kings of these city states. He's acted with the blessing hasn't made him indifferent to Lot, but made him sacrificially concerned to rescue Lot.

The blessing hasn't made him indifferent to the pagans, the Canaanites, the people very different from him who live in the region. The blessing has made him have a heart for them, to desire to liberate them, and to bring them back to where they live.

And that is what has happened. And in verse 17, after his return from the defeat of King C.H.

[29 : 13] and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet Abram at the valley of Shaveh, that is the king's valley. Now you can't really see this in English, but once you go back in a few verses we're going to read about what the king of Sodom says.

But in the original language, there's a way to communicate that he is coming not with gratitude, not with humility, not with thankfulness, but with pride.

That's in the original language, it can't be communicated in English, but you're going to capture it again in a moment when we see the things he says. But Abram isn't just met by the king of Sodom, he's also met by this other mysterious character that just sort of appears out of nowhere, disappears.

He'll be mentioned in a very, very important psalm called Psalm 110, which I think is the most quoted piece of the Old Testament in the New Testament. And in Hebrews chapter six and seven, the writer will make a big deal of what goes on here.

But in verse 18, the other person who meets, comes to meet, they don't travel together, but he also ends up meeting Abram at the same time. Verse 18 is Melchizedek, king of Salem.

[30 : 32] And Melchizedek means righteousness or being right with God. And Salem means peace. And in the ancient world, you can't really have peace unless you have peace with God.

So you have this priest king. Salem is probably a short form for Jerusalem. This priest king from a small place called Jerusalem, who's named righteousness, and he's the king of peace. and he brings out bread and wine. And bread and wine is a, sorry, here's a geek moment. It's called a merism. It, sorry, that's a geek moment.

I put some of you to sleep. It's like if you say you're searching high and low, high and low is a merism. It means that you're searching high, low, and everywhere in between. And so when it says bread and wine, it's the language of a feast.

In other words, everything from the wine to the simplest little thing, like the bread to the most expensive wine and everything in between, it's a way of referring to a banquet. So this mysterious king of Salem, whose name is righteousness and Salem means peace, he comes to meet Abram and he brings out a feast.

[31 : 49] And we also discover that he was priest of God most high. And in verse 19, this priest blesses Abraham. In other words, he's going to pronounce this most high God's name over Abram.

And this representative of the most high God is going to explain what has happened in the story. He's going to reveal to Abram what's really happened.

And what we see has really happened is that blessed be Abram by God most high, possessor of heaven and earth. And you'll, some of your Bibles, if you have your Bibles, you'll see there's a little note.

There's no single word that you can translate the Hebrew into. And so it could either be translated as possessor of heaven and earth or creator of heaven and earth. It's the same idea.

So there's the God most high, who's both created the earth and possesses it currently, everything from the highest heavens to the lowest earth, so everything in between, all that exists, this most high God who's created all things and possesses everything.

[32 : 56] He has blessed Abram. And then verse 20, and blessed, and probably be more accurate to say, and praise be to God most high.

Why? He is the one who has delivered your enemies into your hand. God. Why is it that you could take 318 guys and a couple of guys from your buddies and you could defeat the Mesopotamian war machine?

It wasn't because you're a brilliant general. It wasn't because you're a brilliant strategist. It wasn't because you had better technology. In fact, actually, archaeologically speaking, the Canaanite areas were technologically behind Mesopotamia.

That's what archaeologists would now tell you. It has nothing to do with that. Your victory was a work of God. Your victory was a work of God. You're blessed because God used you.

You're blessed because you understood the blessing and the promise doesn't make you prideful and indifferent to your neighbors or your kinsmen. And even though your neighbors and your kinsmen do not acknowledge God most high or the Lord, you understood that the blessing of God most high upon you has motivated you to take a risk, to pursue them, to defeat the enemy, to set them free and to liberate them.

[34 : 27] And so praise be God most high, verse 20, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

it's an act of homage. Homage is a word that not many people know anymore. Homage is an act of not only worship, but acknowledgement that there is one who is superior to you, that you are in a relationship with, who cares for you, to whom in a sense you owe proper obedience and love and affection to.

And I just sort of want to pause. That's, you see, why. So once again, if you're here and you haven't given Christ, you haven't made Christ your Savior and your Lord, this is a good reminder to say, we don't want you to give us any money.

We'd rather give you money. We'd rather bless you. But for those of us who are Christians, this is where this idea of the tithe begins to come into. That for a Christian to give back 10% of your money to the Lord God is an act of homage.

It's an act of acknowledging that everything you have ultimately is because of your Lord and Master, that your Lord and Master loves you and cares for you, that he's worthy of trust and obedience to, that he will see that your needs are met, and the giving of money back to him and for the cause of his kingdom is an act of homage.

[36 : 12] It's an act of worship. It's why it really isn't a wrong thing to pass a plate in the church. It's why it's not wrong for those of us who call Jesus Savior and Lord to move towards a time when we can return 10% of all that we have, and all that we have is due to his grace and mercy and provision, all things come of him and of his own have we given him, to move to the point that we would turn 10% to him, or more.

But that's one way of living. So what this king, who gives this feast and blesses, this priest king, revealing to Abram that Abram did the right thing in understanding how the blessing is to cause him to have a concern for his neighbors who don't share the same worship of the same God, in a sense aren't even covered directly by that blessing, that that blessing is one that should lead him to care for his neighbors.

And what we see here, by the way, you see, this is what prepares us for the gospel. When Christians read this, what we're also hearing is this, as we read this, if you go back to Galatians, and Galatians will say that it's in this story that Abram preaches the gospel to us.

And how he preaches the gospel to us is this, is that the great Abram's greater offspring is the Lord Jesus Christ. And he pursued you and me, even to the point of death upon the cross, and experiencing all there is to taste of death.

He pursued us all the way to death, to liberate us, to set us free from our pride, our presumption, our greed, our hatred, our racism, our envy, our sins, our serving of idols, our fear of demons, that he pursues us and deals with all that has to be dealt with so that he would rescue us and give us the victory, not because of something that we have earned or accomplished or deserved, but purely and utterly out of his great love for us.

[38 : 25] He goes to the depths of where we are to find us and to rescue us. And when we put our faith and trust in him, he transfers us from the kingdom of lies to the kingdom of truth, from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of life, from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, from the kingdom of hatred to the kingdom of love, from the kingdom of vengeance to the kingdom of mercy, from the kingdom hatred of beauty to the kingdom of beauty he transfers us when we put our faith and trust in him what is the problem with not living in the real world I'm not going to try to prove in this sermon that the triune God exists that's a topic of other types of things but for those of you who are watching and don't know where you are with the whole Christian faith this is at least the Christian story if there is in fact a God that does exist to live in the world as if that God exists is in fact to be living in the real world and to live in the world where the God who's revealed in these scriptures which is a God of rescue a God of blessing a God of grace a God of mercy a God of beauty a God of life a God of light a God of truth whose blessing to us is undeserved and unwarranted freely given and received with open hands which begins to form us in such a way that as this story grips us we begin to become freed from those things which bind us and be able to see ourselves as we really are this is a story to invite us to live in the real world to fight our pride well what about the other way of living look at verse 21 and the king of Sodom said to Abram and it's in a sense a type of command give me the persons but take the goods for yourself now here's the problem and this is just as contemporary as our own lives the lives of those we know one moment Sodom got his butt kicked Sodom the king of Sodom provoked a terrible destructive war out of his pride he provoked the war second thing he lost third thing rather than standing and fighting with his troops if you go back and you read the earlier part he fled to the hills on top of that he left his city undefended so the other army from Mesopotamia can march right in and pillage and plunder his city he was hiding in the hills in terror not exercising his power that he should as a king to protect his own city and now that somebody else has defeated his enemy he already in his mind is trying to tell some other story no no no I didn't provoke it it was all their fault no no I didn't actually lose the battle I was actually just being very very smart no no I don't I'm not the I'm not the lord of somebody that all my rich people and powerful people have been kidnapped no no no no none of those things have gone on I'm still the king I'm in charge and not only is he thinking that in his mind Abram as we're going to see in a moment realizes that this king with his demands and his pride is not living in the real world pride leads you to not live in the real world and he's already formulating a story in his own mind how the fact that Abram who deserves all of the possessions that actually it's just because King King Sodom I'm making the kids cry I'm sorry that you know it's really just because of his grace and mercy that he's allowing it's all a fantasy world all of it's a fantasy world he's a legend in his own mind and a failure in real life and he's not dealing with the real world none of us have bosses or underlings like this at all none of us have neighbors or kids and none of us have ever been like this ourselves

I stand condemned I say that I'm not I'm not saying that this is a human problem so he makes this peremptory thing give me the persons and take the goods for yourself well he doesn't get to he can only come as a supplicant he should be coming thank you so much and by the way Abram I hope you don't mention too many people that I ran away and hid but Abram said to the king of Sodom

you see grace and blessing the grace and blessing that comes from the true and living God forms you to live in the real world and in the real world you don't take the proud pronouncements of those in power as reflecting what's really going on we need to learn that when we look at the government and the media and the judiciary they can say it doesn't mean it's true they can say it doesn't mean it's real they can say it over and over and over again doesn't make it true see we need to be so gripped with the gospel and what Christ has done for us in the cross so we understand that God is calling us to live as people of the truth and not as people of the lie people of the beauty and not of the people who hate beauty people of the good not people of the evil people of love not the people of hatred people of light and clarity not darkness and confusion but Abram said to the king of Sodom

I have lifted my hand to the Lord I have made a vow a pledge to God most high Lord the God most high possessor of heaven and earth creator of heaven and earth that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours lest you should say I have made Abram rich his fantasy world of pride I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten and the share of the men who have went with me let Aner and Escol and Mamre take their share and so Abram is going to release the plunder in the people and take not himself you see the blessing and the grace that comes from the gospel make forms us and prepares us to live in the real world and be generous and to care for our family and our neighbors in our world it should form us not to try to seek the good of the city of Ottawa or the nation of Canada as Ottawa and Canada defines the good but as the true and living God defines the good from that perspective we should work on Parliament Hill we should work in Apple and in Facebook we should work in small businesses and we should work in municipal politics and we should work in education and we should work in academia and we should work in the media and we should work in our neighborhood to be good neighbors who seek the true good of our neighborhood our city and our nation and the world not from the city's perspective but from God's perspective the true good the gospel forms us to seek the true good open-handed open-hearted and generous

[46 : 16] I invite you to stand let's bow our heads in prayer Father if there are any here who have not yet or watching or will watch in the months or the days or weeks or months or years to come that are watching Father if they have not yet given their life to Christ Father and if they are feeling a tug in their heart or their spirit that they should open themselves to Christ and ask him to be their Savior and Lord Father I ask that the Holy Spirit would move in their lives and to help them take that interior step of committing themselves of asking Jesus to be their Savior and Lord to be their blessing and to have his grace come into their lives and Father I ask that the Holy Spirit would help them to just stop running and stop keeping Christ far away but to open the door and turn to him and we thank you Father that Jesus will come into any who calls to him to be their Savior and Lord and Father for those of us here or online who have given our lives to Christ

Father we give you thanks and praise that Christ died for us that the grace and blessing that he offers us of being connected to you in a way that will see us spend in eternity in the new heaven and the new earth that that grace is something bestowed upon us which is unmerited unaccomplished undeserved on our part that is purely and utterly an accomplishment of you and a work of power and love from you and we ask Father that you would grip us with these stories and with the life of Christ the person of Christ the accomplishment of Christ that as he grips us and what he has done for us grips us that we can begin to see the world as it really is and see our lives as it really is and respond with gratitude with thanks with praise with repentance with amendment of life with sobriety with soberness as your grace and your goodness works in our lives that you form us Father for a life of freedom in pursuit of the truth and of love and of beauty of goodness and mercy and we ask all these things in the name of Jesus your Son and our Savior Amen Amen