

I am Second

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, we ask that you would gently but deeply pour out the Holy Spirit upon us as we think upon your word. We ask, Father, that your word would come into our hearts, into the center of who we are, that your word would speak to us and draw us closer to you, to know Jesus and what he has accomplished for us on the cross.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So I'm going to begin with a bit of a confession.

I had a really hard time last week trying to work on my sermon. And I'm not saying this so that afterwards it will come up and say, Oh, George, that was a good sermon. I'm not saying it to look for a compliment.

But here was the problem as I was preparing the text. So it was really easy to take that text that I preached on last Sunday and make it into either a moralistic or a therapeutic sermon.

It would have been very easy to do. And a moralistic sermon is a sermon where I basically use the scripture text to tell you how you should be a good person. You need to do this to be a good person.

[1 : 12] And a therapeutic sermon is where I use the scripture text to tell you how to be a better person or a more successful person. And it would be very easy to use last week's sermon text.

Like I looked at it and I was thinking to myself, I could do all of those things sort of effortlessly. So the text that last week, the first little bit of it was how God calls this moon worshiper who's unsuitable and unqualified and unworthy.

And he calls them and says, Go to where you don't know where I'm going to go. And I'm going to bless you. You're going to be a great nation. You're going to be a blessing that blesses others. And then there's a, you know, he goes, Abram goes and then he, God gives him this other promise that there's going to be a mighty nation and he's going to give him the land.

And then, you know, when there's a little bit of a problem, Abram goes down to Egypt. And as we talked about last week, he makes these like really foolish and wrong things.

Him and his wife pretend they're brother and sister. And his wife gets taken into Pharaoh's harem. And it's just all a big mess. Okay. So I could have taken that sermon. I could have said all of these things, you know, and if I wanted to be a good person, well, a good person prays.

[2 : 27] And that's Abram's fault. He didn't pray. And so if you want to be a good person, you got to pray. Or it could have been a bit of a therapeutic sermon about how to be more successful. Like if you don't want to get stuck into these types of things, you know, you look before you leap, think before you act, you know, and I could have given you these little things and little nostrums from the text.

And to be honest, a lot of churches, that's what people think a good sermon is. That if I was just to say, you know, you got to pray more, this story shows you got to pray more. And this story shows you need to trust God more.

And this story shows you need to, you know, look before you leap, you know, think before you act, and all of that type of stuff. And a lot of churches afterwards that people would come up and say, way to go, pastor, way to go, great sermon, really needed that.

And that, I mean, and that of course is, is very flattering to the ego. But the problem is, well, there's lots of problems. You know, the first one is, really, we don't need more moral advice.

And, you know, sometimes, and, and, you know, my wife can tell you correctly, all the things that I need to improve. And, and both in terms of how to, how to improve and, you know, what to improve.

[3 : 44] But, you know, and those things are very helpful. We have to know them, but often they end up beating us down. Like, you know, it might give us a, it's like eating candy and gives you like a quick rush, but then there's the, the, the, the, the insulin kick in that comes, or not insulin, the other thing that kicks in and makes you down.

And it just, we don't need more moralistic advice all the time. It, it weighs us down. And it, it can easily lead to play acting and pretend and, and just making it look like we're way better than we are.

You see, really a sermon, like sometimes I try to think, how would I describe a sermon to a non-Christian? And, and so one of the ways I would try to describe it, if they ask, like, what, what do we do?

I'd say something like, well, Christians believe that God wants us to be with others and be an person, to receive from him. And, and one of the things he wants us to receive from him is he wants us to hear him speak.

And, and we hear him speak and, and then respond to him in a way that's good. And so you see, really, uh, part of what a sermon should really be about is, is helping, uh, helping us all to, to hear the text and to understand the text and to see how the text connects to us.

[5 : 09] But the sermon should do more than that. You see, it, it should also help us to want to adore Christ. Which just giving you five points to be, know God's will for your life, how to know God's will for your life better, or four more reasons why you need to be more prayerful.

It might load us down with some guilt and it might even good grief, give us a couple of helpful ideas, but it doesn't actually help us to worship Christ.

And not only Christ, like Christ and what he's done for us on the cross. And, and obviously part of that happening is just the work of the Holy spirit. That's nothing that I can do or any, any minister can do.

It's the work of the Holy spirit. And that's one of the things you need to pray for is that it's not just that, you know, that that's the worship time over there where we sing. And now this is sermon. No, that's the worship time. And this is the worship time.

That's really what it should be. It's all worship. And, and so you need to pray. And if some of you are watching or some of you are here and you're non-Christian, you might think, well, that sort of doesn't even make, I don't know, church, that's never going to happen.

[6 : 17] I'm not going to listen to your sermon. I want to adore Christ. Well, I don't know. You might be surprised, but for a non-Christian, it really, I guess the hope would be that after hearing the text and seeing how the text is actually surprisingly relevant, that it might make you want to at least wish that Christianity were true.

Or consider that Christianity is true. And, and I don't know how well a job I did on that last week. And so one of the things you can do is we go through these very, very, very old stories, stories of a man who lived 4,000 years ago and was probably written about 34, or 3,500 years ago.

You can pray that that will happen, not just here, but when Daniel preaches that, that you'll understand the story better, see how it actually talks into your life. But more importantly, that as, as we speak and spend time together, that it causes you to want to adore Christ.

And I don't know how well I did that last week, but I'm not asking for compliments. But what happens after this story? So, as I said, sort of describe what happened. Um, we're going to look at this story.

In fact, actually the story that we're going to look at today is a story, which is regularly used in a moralistic or therapeutic way, like regularly used with telling you how to, how to be a better person and the importance of being a better person and the rewards of being a better person and, and how to be a more successful person.

[7 : 42] It's actually a, almost like a proof text often for those types of purposes. So let's, let's look at the story. It's Genesis chapter 13, beginning at verse one. If you have your own Bibles, that would be the best.

If you don't, uh, the words will be up on the screen. And here's this very famous story, uh, which we just read a tiny bit of it in the service. And it begins like this. So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him into the Negev.

So this is just, in fact, some people, when they're putting the book together, they would have included this verse with the last chapter. Some people think that this chapter should really begin in a sense with verse two.

Um, the, the verses and all were added by, uh, uh, a guy putting the Bible into print a long time ago. It's not part of the original. It's just to help us find things. And so, you know, the, the way the story ended was, uh, Abram and Sarah get themselves into this incredible mess, uh, because of their foolishness and, uh, and God intervenes.

And part of God's intervening is that Pharaoh kicks him out. So what happens is the end of chapter 12 is basically it would, it's as if the military or the police escort, uh, Abram and his party to the edge of the Egyptian border and make sure they cross the border, telling them don't come back.

[9 : 02] And so that's where verse one is. Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, uh, and law with him into the Negev, which is sort of a wilderness type area, uh, in Southern, uh, sort of, uh, uh, Israel.

Verse two. Now, Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, uh, and in gold. And he journeyed on from the Negev as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning between Bethel and A, to the place where he had made an altar at the first.

And there Abram called upon the name of the Lord. And we'll just sort of, uh, pause here for a second. Um, the language is a tiny bit confusing. If you look at it very carefully, you get to see it.

But basically, uh, what, what Abram is doing, he's not going back to the very first altar. He's going in a sense back to that time when he had acted on God's invitation, uh, to be his, and he'd heard God's blessing pronounced over him.

And the blessing pronounced not only that he would be a blessing, that God was going to bless him, that Abram was going to be a blessing, was going to be blessed in a way that blessed others, that, that even though Abram is childless and past the age of childbearing, that there'd be a, an offspring that would come, that would be a blessing, that he'd have the land and he'd be a, a mighty, a mighty nation.

[10 : 22] And, and, and Abram first responded by leaving where he was to, to go on this journey, uh, to receive God's blessing. And then when he gets to the promised land, he, he creates a, he, he makes an altar.

He doesn't just sort of borrow. He, he doesn't very specifically borrow an altar that's made to one of the Canaanite gods. He makes his own altar and it's an altar to the Lord. And, and when it, he says here, calls out on the name of the Lord and with the altar, it's, um, he's, um, basically what we see is he's returning to the life where in a sense his, his walk with God began.

And this just at a very simple level level is a, is a very comforting story for Christians. I don't know about you, but some Christians, some of you, some of us have maybe left the faith for a season.

Uh, maybe we've left the faith, not just for a season, but for a year or five years or 10 years. And then we come back and it's very comforting thing. The flow of the story shows that Abram's done the right thing and that God accepts him.

That we're always welcomed back. If we have given our life to Christ and then we wander far from him, he always welcomes us back. You see how that story works very simply.

[11 : 42] He always welcomes us back. So he, um, and, and actually when it says here, build an altar and called on his name, like, uh, this doesn't mean that he just sort of goes to the altar, does a bit of worship and homage and then goes on with his life.

It really, what he's done, it would be as if, uh, you, let's say we're all Iranians and, uh, Persians or Iranians, or maybe we're all Saudi Arabians. And we hear that, um, that, um, that I, the, the Ayatollah in Iran has allowed there to be a church in Tehran.

And that if, if we go to that church, we'll be able to worship. Uh, and we're allowed to build a church. And if we go to and use that church, we're allowed to worship. And so we returned to, to, to, to Tehran and we not only build the church, but because the church is the place where we'll meet regularly and where we'll have our small groups and, and where we'll, um, have, you know, friendship conversations and communal meals and have youth group and, and all of that.

We, we also want to live. We want to live near it because that's the place where we gather to be in God's presence. And that's what you see here. The, the place where, uh, Abram begins his walk with God, uh, in response to God's promise to bless him.

He's now back at the place. And so he's there so he can use the altar regularly to pay homage to the Lord and call on the name of the Lord regularly. He's, he's settled there to, to go back after his, his foolishness.

[13 : 16] And, um, just, just the other day, um, within the last couple of weeks, I was talking to a person and they were sharing with me how shocked they were.

Uh, somebody that, uh, was quite a bit older than him, like my age or even a bit older that they'd always looked up to. And it had been very important in the church. Uh, they had just heard that their marriage after 40 years had broken up.

And, and my friend was really bothered by this. And he said, you know, George, it's, you sort of hope that you reach a certain point in time in your life or you reach a certain point in time in your marriage where things like that don't happen.

It's as if you, you pass a, a point and, and now you're, it's just not going to happen. And so it was very unsettling for him to think that something like that could happen at any point in time.

And, and so here, if the story just ended here, it still would be a good story. And I haven't turned it into one where you'd want to adore Christ. It's just like, it's been a comforting thought, but, but actually what happens is here, Abram's back with all of his family.

[14 : 22] He's back at the beginning of his journey. He's reconnected to the Lord. The Lord has accepted him and, and he's doing very, very well. But now problems come. Like a very deep and real problem comes and affects Abram and his party.

And look what it says. It's verse five. And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together for their possessions were so great that they could not be able to do it.

And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. At that time, the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land.

Now, just a bit of an aside. Canaanites, that part of it, they want to let you know why there's some scarce resources, because it's not that they're the only people in the land. And Canaanites probably mean people who lived in the villages and Perizzites probably mean people who lived on the land outside of the walled villages.

But here's the thing. And it's, in a sense, a very, very shocking problem to Canadians. What causes the problem is prosperity.

[15 : 35] What causes the problem is prosperity. Now, this is actually, if you think about it a second, a very, very unsettling issue, because fundamentally, we as Canadians think that prosperity solves problems.

In fact, I mean, we live in Ottawa, and some of you have worked on Parliament Hill, and I can't remember who, one of you were once telling me that in politics, the hardest cabinet positions are ones that either deal with veterans affairs or deal with health care.

What was the third one? Veterans, anyway, maybe it was First Nations issues. Anyway, the problem with these portfolios is you can never give enough money. Like, you can never give enough money.

Give an extra \$5 billion, people will still complain they don't have enough money. How do you solve a problem in Canada? More money. Because more money is going to solve the problem. And, you know, the fact of the matter is, is, you know, we just had a government, and I'm, this is not, I'm not making any anti, I mean, good grief.

We've all, the only difference between the parties was whether it be like, I don't know, a gazillion billion dollars or a gazillion minus \$10 billion. So it's not like, this isn't a political comment, right?

[16 : 50] But we've given piles of money, and it hasn't stopped the problems in the country, and people aren't happier. And it's not even clear that we're going to be richer after the end of all this money being spent.

But how do we as Canadians, like we as Canadians fundamentally think that money solves problems. But here, money has caused the problem.

So, in a sense, what's this text going to tell us? Is it going to tell us, well, what they've just decided is, we're going to solve this by having a management team, and not only are we going to manage these resources, we're going to buy more resources to be, no, no, what happens?

It goes in a very, very un-Canadian way of solving the problem of prosperity. Look what happens in verse 8. Then Abram said to Lot, let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen.

Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right. Or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.

[18 : 00] Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley, sort of a rift valley, was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar.

Now, a bit of an ominous note about things that are going to happen in the following chapters. This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. We'll talk about that in a couple of weeks.

So Lot, and this is very significant, Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they, that's Lot and Abram, separated from each other.

Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom, here's another sort of dark note, now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners, against the Lord.

Now, what Abram does here, to create peace, so first of all, what Lot does is, he chooses the area where the river is, where there's all the streams and the brooks, he leaves to Abram, in a sense, there's just a steady water supply there, and he's left to Abram, the highland, and the highland depends upon the rain.

[19 : 21] So, so, in a sense, you can pick the security of the river, or depending upon the rain, and he chooses security of the river, he goes down to where it's very prosperous. But here's the thing, which is very, very counterintuitive.

So, imagine for a moment, that some of you are in the civil servants, civil service, and you get to go on a plane, with the deputy minister, and there's eight of you, and, you know, everything from people who are, I don't know, maybe assistant deputy minister, all the way down, and they bring in a, maybe a student intern, or something like that, who's just, just on an internship thing, and they're all going to go on a plane, and before you get in the plane, there's only one first class, or business class ticket, which of course is the deputy ministers, and everybody else, the other nine people, are going to sit in working class, and the deputy minister says, to the student intern, I'd let you pick the seat, pick the seat first, like that's not how, the real world works, like nobody would even be bothered, if the fact that the deputy minister, just goes and sits in first class, and everybody else sits in working class, like that wouldn't bother anybody, that would just be, understood that the way, things work, or if you're the owner of a company, and you're, you know, there's something similar, and you let the janitor, be the one who picks first, you see that, the thing which is going on here, in the text, is there's a vast difference, between Abram and Lot,

Abram is the patriarch, he is the head of the clan, so to speak, he's the head of the tribe, Lot, is only, in a sense, welcomed, into Abram's, tribe, or clan, as an act of grace, by Abram, because Abram's an orphan, I mean, sorry, Lot is an orphan, and Lot is an orphan, and brought in, to Abram's tribe, under Abram's leadership, and protection, purely, and utterly, out of just a, filial, like, familial, affection, and generosity, on Abram, all of Lot's wealth, is because, he's in a sense, under Abram's, tribe, and clan, and so, Abram, should be the one, who chooses, and usually, in the world, that wouldn't even be viewed, as being, as being, like, surprising, or shocking, obviously, that guy, makes a decision, the person, who just gets invited in, under the boss's protection, doesn't get to make the decision, so Abram does something, which is, counterintuitive, it's counterintuitive, and it goes against the grain, about the way, that we fundamentally work, like, you know, in hierarchies,

I'm not saying, that everybody in a hierarchy, is like this, but the goal, is to climb the greasy pole, and if somebody else, there's only so many positions, to move up, and I'm not saying, everybody who moves up, does this by the way, it's, that would be terrible, if that was the only way, that things work, just as, it's not the case, that people, who make, good money in business, do it because, they're terrible people, and they oppress, that's not, that's not the way, the world works, sometimes, you do just, you do, do these things, just because, you're good at what you do, and you're successful, at what you do, but, you know, the basic, in a sense, inclination, of the, of the Canadian way, is you take your break, snooze, you lose, if somebody makes, a bit of a, like an odd thing, like that, that they shouldn't do, you take advantage, of the situation, for your, your own betterment, and your own type, of advancement, and afterwards, you and your friends, will all sort of, have a bit of a chuckle, about the fact, that the other person, who should have made the decision, and made a bit of a slip up, that they allowed you, to do an in run around them, and in a sense, get ahead of them, and you all sort of chuckle, but you might even go out, and celebrate, you know, buy expensive steak, have some expensive cigars, have some expensive wine, to celebrate the fact, that you've been successful, at these types of things, so Abram does something, which is counter intuitive, and not the way, that people would normally act, so what does God say, about this, what does God say, about this, does God, going to say to Abram, that you should have, exercised your authority, you should have exercised, your right, you should have exercised, your prerogatives, next time smarten up, was this another type, of mistake, that Abram had made, just as he had made a mistake, when he went into Egypt, well the text tells us, look at what the text says, in verse 14, the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, okay what's the Lord, going to say, lift up your eyes, and look from the place, where you are, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, for all the land, that you see,

I will give to you, and to your offspring, forever, just, I will make, your offspring, as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count, the dust of the earth, your offspring, also can be counted, arise, walk through the length, and breadth of the land, for I, will give it, to you, so if you go back, and you read, Genesis chapter 12, verses 2 and 3, and then you read verse 7, the original promises, the place, right, Abram's return, to the place of blessing, the place of, where God first spoke to him, and made these profound, acts of grace, of blessing to him, and God's response, to what has just happened, is to, in a sense, expand, and deepen, and double down, on those original promises, of blessing, that God had made, to Abram, now, here's where moralism, and therapeutic preaching, comes in, and this is where, our natural heart, gets the story wrong, because I can say to you, aha, this just shows, if you're humble,

[25 : 26] God will exalt you, if you're generous, God will make you rich, there's whole churches, based on those types, of ideas, just look at the text, Abraham was humble, and now he's going, to be even greater, just look at the text, he took the position, of being generous, towards Lot, to make peace, and now, Abram's going, to even be richer, go thou, and do likewise, and in the right type, of church, you all say, way to go George, that was a really helpful, type of sermon, but the problem is, here's the problem, well first of all, it's not true, it's just not true, just ask anybody, who's always humble, if that always means, they get the promotions, doesn't work that way, just ask anybody, who gives their money, to churches, or charity, all the time, and whether they're way richer,

I mean you might find, some people that it works on, and they have, they have their 1-800 number, they have their Instagram, their Twitter, the, all those TikTok, and everything else, the Facebook, and they promote it, and all of that type of stuff, but for most people, it doesn't work, but here's the fundamental problem, and this is one of the reasons, you see, why, in our culture, there is a profound, rejection of religion, because Canadians, Canadians on one level, understand that religious, and spiritual, religion, being religious, and being spiritual, is basically just a form of this, and that is, that that advice promotes selfishness, and narcissism, and self-centeredness, why, why, why, why, well, if I tell you, that by being humble, you'll be great, you're not humble to be humble, you're humble to be great, you're actually just seeking greatness, you're actually just seeking, to be over everybody, like, if I told you, that you know what, if you gave, a thousand dollars, to the poor,

God's going to give you, ten thousand dollars, you don't really care about the poor, you care about the ten thousand dollars, don't you, if I tell you, that being self-effacing, gives you the promotion, you don't care about being self-effacing, you care about the promotion, all you're doing, is trying to give yourself a gift, and be superior, and you see, at the heart, that's the problem, with most, with religion, and with spirituality, and that's one of the reasons, why so many Canadians, are rejecting, religion and spirituality, in all of its forms, because they have this, some of them, just because they've been burned, and some of them, for other reasons, and some of them, for a bit of an intuition about it, that at the end of the day, that's why people go into these things, and on one hand, it just doesn't work, you can give all your money, to the church, you don't get richer, all you are is poorer, and you just listen to your advice, and it doesn't work, and on the other hand, do we really just want to be more selfish, and narcissistic, and at the same time, you're selfish, and narcissistic, in a way that makes you, self-satisfied, and superior, against other, towards other people, and that's very, very unattractive, so is that what's really, going on in the story here, no, it's not what's going on, in the story at all, you see, what goes on in the text, is that it isn't, that being humble, gets you blessing, or it isn't, that being generous, means that you're going to be blessed, but it's because,

Abraham is gripped, and believes the blessing, that he's freed up, to be humble, it's because, he is in the place, where, and he believes those promises, he believes the promises, that God, is going to make, him a blessing, God is going to give him the land, God is going to give him the offspring, and he is at the altar, calling on the name of the Lord, and it's because, he is believing, that promise of blessing, that he is freed up, to be humble, it is because, he believes, the promise of blessing, from God, that he is freed up, to be generous, it is because, he is freed up, by the blessing, to be generous, that he's able, to make peace, you see, that's what's going on, in the text, that's why, it's as if, the problem is, that religion, and all, they want to keep, they want to forget, the fact that, that there's this profound, blessing that God, gives the unworthy, and undeserving, and unqualified,

Abram, and what's going on, in the text, is there's, in a sense, an entry into, see, like what's humility, normally, when we think of humility, we think of people, who don't have any self-esteem, we think of people, who, have a real problem, I mean, from our outside, we look at them, they look as if, they have a great problem, with negative, like bad self-talk, they, they, they say to themselves, I'm ugly, I'm stupid, I'm a bad person, if people got to know me better, they wouldn't like me, the more they get to know me, they won't like me, and, and, and I, because I'm a bad person, I deserve to have bad things, happen to me, and, and so we talk like that, to ourselves, and, and we come across, as, as not being very self-assertive, we come across, as being humble, but if all of, all of humility is, is just learning how to say, very, very bad things to ourselves, over and over, and over again, and often acting out of it, and on one hand, believing it, on the other hand, just being ripped up with sorrow, that that's true about us, because on one hand, we say it over and over, to ourselves, that we're a bad person, we're an unworthy person, we're an ugly person, and, and on one hand, we say it and believe it, on the other hand, it breaks our heart, that why is it, that I'm such a bad, and unworthy, and a lovely person, and a stupid person, and I wish I wasn't like that, and why is it, that other people are seeing, and they don't even look like, they're better than me yet, and, and so, for, for, in our culture, that's, how we tend to see humility, and everything about it, just is unattractive, and wrong, but we can learn, about humility better, if we look at children, young children,

[32:12] I was, coming back, from Charlottetown, and, I was in a seat, and there was an empty seat, beside me, and there was a mom, with a young kid, probably about a year and a half, and, you know, one of the things, about those young kids, is, they can have a toy, or they can see something, and you can just see, that for a moment, they're transfixed, by what they're looking at, like, they're just transfixed, by it, and as they're transfixed, by it, this picture, this toy, I mean, it wasn't a puppy, on the plane, but you see it, if, you know, you have a little child, come in, where there's a puppy, and they're just transfixed, by it, and you can tell, that when they're transfixed, by that puppy, or that thing, that, that delightful thing, or that the face, of a person, that it's as if, they forget that they exist, but not in a bad way, you see, here's what humility is, humility, is not self, trash talk, healing, humility, is a type of, healing, self forgetfulness, that ennobles you, biblical humility, humility, is a type of, healing, self forgetfulness, that ennobles you, and it's, it's a self forgetfulness, by looking at something, that's good, that's beautiful, that's true, that's blessing, that's grace, and as we look, and think upon that, which is grace, which is beautiful, which is good, which is lovely, which is true, there can be moments, even in our fallen, fallen lives, where we almost forget, that we, exist, and that's humility, and so, what we see here, with Abram, is that, after the, bad time, his screwing up, by going into Egypt, he's made the very long journey, to go back, to where grace is, where blessing is, and he goes back, to that place of grace, and blessing, and he's thinking, and looking, in a sense, in his mind's eye, he's captivated, with the blessing, and as he's captivated, with the blessing, he is enabled, he's freed up, to be generous, to be humble, you see, in Canada, we think money, will make peace, and money, doesn't make peace, in the story, we see, the generosity, self-effacingness, and humility, that's what creates peace, in this situation, and it flows, out of a trust, and a confidence, and being gripped, by the grace, and the blessing, but there's something, deeper here, which this story, is forming us, to receive, you know,

I like watching movies, I like reading books, if you just, if you were to look, at Netflix, or Amazon Prime, and watch most, of the things, that they provide, you would ever, you would think, that nobody, in North America, ever prays, that nobody, in North America, ever goes to church, that nobody, in North America, ever reads the Bible, ever, prayer, and in some ways, that helps to form us, to why would we pray, why would we read the Bible, why would we go to church, the stories of the world, show that, things happen in ways, that those things, are completely, and utterly irrelevant, this story, forms us, and prepares us, for something, which is very profound, you see, in the scripture readings, I read the words, of Jesus, where Jesus says, I am the good shepherd, and the G, and Jesus says, amongst other things, I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, my sheep know my name, and I lay down, my life for the sheep, and on one hand, we know that's not, the way the world works, shepherds, shear the sheep, and then eat them, why, because,

I'm a shepherd, I'm a human being, the sheep is a sheep, Abraham is the greater, and he sets aside, his prerogatives, and his power, and his rights, for the good, of peace, and that prepares us, for Jesus to say, I, the shepherd, will lay down, my life for sheep, and it prepares us, to understand, that the difference, between, God, and me, is bigger, than the difference, between me, and a sheep, and if there's anyone, that, that, like, why would God, set aside his prerogatives, why would he, set aside his rights, why would he, set any of those things aside, and in humility, do something for me, and that's what this story, prepares us for, for us to hear, the words of Jesus, and to know, that they are true, that he is the good shepherd, and he lays down, his life for the sheep, you see, in the gospel, we have this profound, gift of grace, this profound, blessing, that we are, at enmity with God, at enmity with ourselves, at enmity with each other, and at enmity, not always, but at enmity with creation, and we want to be first, and we can't fix this, and God sets aside his prerogatives, and God humbles himself, and God is generous, and God does, what we cannot do for ourselves, and God, in the person of his son, makes the way of peace, that we can, if we receive it, know the blessing, of his love for us, the blessing, of his desire to be with us, the blessing, of not just being his sheep, that he will care for, but that we can be his sons, and daughters, and his friends, and so,

Christ, invites us, to be once again, enraptured, have our eyes fixed on, to understand grace, because, as that is what, grips our heart, at a deeper level, what happens is, that we are freed up, to be generous, we are freed up, to be humble, we are freed up, to be peacemakers, the humble, are lighter, than the proud, the generous, are lighter, than the greedy, and the peacemakers, are lighter, and more beautiful, than the ones, who make war, and Christ, is calling you, to come back, to that place, to be, gripped by the gospel, let's stand, father, we very simply, we very simply ask, that you would make us, disciples of Jesus, who are gripped, by the gospel, that you would make us, people who are, once again, we come together, to hear your word, to hear of, how your son, humbled himself, even to the point, of death, on the cross, so that we might be free, that we might live, that we might be free, in you, that we might live, in your blessing, a blessing, that begins, on this side of death, and will progress, day by day, and till that day, when our eyes close, in death, but open in your presence, and you welcome us, into your kingdom, in the new heaven, in the new earth, forever, in a redeemed creation, with all, who are redeemed, and we ask Lord, that you would grip us afresh, with the wonder of grace, so that we might be freed up, to be generous, to be humble, to make peace, where we are, for the good of people, for the good of the city, for our good, and your glory, and we ask all this, in the name of Jesus, your son, and our savior, amen.