

PM Genesis 12:10-13:1 My way or God's way?

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[0 : 00] from the reading that he gave to Norman. So, Genesis chapter 12, verse 10, to chapter 13, verse 4. So this morning we looked at Abraham being called by God to go and follow him on a journey into Canaan.

And the Lord had told him how he would bless him to become the founder of a great nation. Now we see Abraham face his first challenge that's recorded.

So there's now a famine across the land. So we're reading from chapter 12, verse 10. Now there was a famine in the land.

So Abraham went down to Egypt to sojourn there. For the famine was severe in the land. When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai, his wife, I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance.

And when the Egyptians see you, they will say, this is his wife. Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say, you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake.

[1 : 19] When Abraham entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh.

And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And for her sake, he dealt well with Abraham. And he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female donkeys and camels.

Then the Lord afflicted Pharaoh. And his house was great plagues because of Sarai, Abraham's wife. So Pharaoh called Abraham and said, What is this you have done to me?

Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you not say she is my sister? Why did you say she is my sister? So that I took her for my wife. Now then, here is your wife.

Take her and go. And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him. And they sent him away with his wife and all that he had. So Abraham went up from Egypt.

[2 : 29] He and his wife and all that he had. And Lot went with him into the Niger. Now Abraham was very rich in livestock, in silver and gold.

And he journeyed on from the Nizab as far as Bethel. To the place where his tent had been at the beginning. Between Bethel and Ai. To the place where he had made an altar at first.

And there Abraham called upon the name of the Lord. Thanks be to God for the reading of his word. We are also going to have another brief reading. From Luke 23.

Luke 23 verses 13 to 49. I was doing my preparation this afternoon.

I just felt that this was really quite appropriate. To bring it into a New Testament context. And we will touch on it during the sermon. So Luke 23 verses 39 to 49.

[3 : 32] So Jesus has been taken out to be crucified. Along with the two criminals. One of the criminals who was hanging railed at him.

Saying, are you not to Christ? Save yourself and us. But the other rebuked him saying, Do you not fear God? Since you are under the same sentence of condemnation.

And we indeed justly. For we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong. And he said, Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.

And he said to him. Truly I say to you. Today you will be with me in paradise. It was now about the sixth hour. And there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

While the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus calling out with a loud voice said. Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

[4 : 41] And having said this, he breathed his last. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place. He praised God saying. Certainly this man was innocent.

And all the crowds that had assembled for the spectacle. When they saw what had taken place. Returned home beating their breasts. And all his acquaintances. And the women who had followed him from Galilee. Stood at a distance. Watching these things. Thanks be to God for the reading of his word. And to his name be the glory and the praise forever. Amen. Let's bow our heads once more. Let's come before God once more in prayer. Before we come to look at God's word.

Let us briefly bow our heads in prayer. Father, we thank you that we can come together to praise your name.

[5 : 39] To study your word. And as we look now at your scriptures. May the words of my mouth. And the meditations and thoughts of our hearts and minds.

Be acceptable in your sights. These things we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord and our Redeemer. Amen. Amen. So a question to start this evening.

Are you going your own way? Or are you going in God's way? Now many of you may have heard of a thing called karaoke.

A thing where people select a tune from a, we'll see a jukebox. The words go up on the screen. The tune is played. And you sing along. Obviously, it's not something that I do.

That's why the mic is always muted when we're singing. And praise to God. You just don't want to hear me sing. But what do you think the most popular song in karaoke is?

[6 : 42] What do you think it might be? Well, actually, the most popular song requested is My Way by Frank Sinatra. Now, that in itself may be no surprise.

Many people like Frank Sinatra. But the selection of all the songs that he sang to sing My Way perhaps can be taken as a reflection on our thought processes and our society.

Of all the songs recorded, we sing a song or choose a song that talks about us doing things the way we want it done. So, which way are you going tonight?

Are you going your way? Or are you going God's way? We heard this morning that Abraham had been called from Haran to Canaan.

He had been called out from a comfortable life to follow God. And he had to step out in faith, leaving behind all that he had established.

[7 : 54] Remember, he'd been at it for a wee while. He was 75 when he answered the call. So he goes out and he follows God, not knowing where he's going or for how long.

He trusts in him. He's on his own, going through possibly dangerous territory, but always relying on God.

But here we see Abraham now facing times of trials. And as I say, it's the first recorded trial that we learn that Abraham has had.

No doubt there were other difficult times while he was travelling to the land of Canaan. But in those stories, in those events, we see that he relied upon God. Now, Abraham says, I will do it my way. He turns his back on the faith that he has placed in God and decides that he will make his way. So we see tonight that Abraham follows his own way and he turns away from God.

[9 : 04] We see that Abraham returns to God and repents towards the end of the passage. And we see also God's response when someone returns to him.

We see how our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, responds when someone turns to him with a contrite heart. Abraham trusted God and his journey.

And God had shown Abraham great patience and promise. And Abraham had given him praise. However, now he finds the difficulty of famine.

And instead of walking with God, he decides to go his own way. Something from which we are not immune. How often do we start walking in God's ways?

Then we turn our backs in God, desiring to go our own way. Abraham had journeyed into Egypt.

[10 : 17] And now he had to make his own decisions. And the first thing is, he realises that there is a danger to himself. The Pharaoh and the people of Egypt will see how beautiful his wife is.

And their desires to take possession of his wife. They will kill him. And then Sarah can be remarried.

So, what does Abraham decide to do? He does not go and tell lies. But he certainly does not go and tell the truth.

He decides rather to make up a little story. He says, say that you are my sister.

Now actually, in Genesis 20, verse 12, later on, we find out that they are actually half-brother and sister. So he wasn't going and telling an outright lie.

[11:24] There was a blood relationship. They were half-siblings. But he wasn't being truthful. It wasn't a lie, but it was deliberate deception.

It was a sin of omission. And today, are we really any better? Today, how often do we not tell lies, we decide rather to paint a picture that makes us look a little better than we are?

We just miss out the bad bits to get the picture that we want painted over. In verse 14 and 15, we learn that Abraham's fears come to fruition.

We learn that Abraham entered Egypt. The Egyptians saw that the woman was beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw how beautiful she was, they ran and told Pharaoh about the beauty of this woman.

Pharaoh decides to take her as his wife. Pharaoh has a plan to marry Abraham's wife.

[12:41] So the Pharaoh deals with Abraham as the brother, negotiating the dowry. And he appears to deal fairly with Abraham.

But now, Abraham has a problem. How is he going to protect his wife? And how is he going to protect God's plan that him and Sarah, as we would know later, would become the parents of a great nation?

Well, obviously, Abraham is but one man with a small band standing against the might of Egypt. Abraham's only hope is that God intervenes. God enters the fray and God shows his power by sending a plague that means that the Pharaoh decides to step back from marrying Sarah.

He finds out that Sarah is Abraham's wife. In verses 18 and 19, we read, And for her sake, he dealt well with Abraham.

[14:09] Sorry, that's verse 16. So Pharaoh called Abraham and said, What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say she is my sister?

So that I took her for my wife. Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go. Imagine the Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt.

A nation with dubious moral conduct. This is a nation where Pharaohs would marry their mothers to make sure they could hold on to the power.

Actually, had higher moral standing than Abraham. He sees the wrong in taking another man's wife and rebukes Abraham.

And he tells Abraham to leave his land. But Abraham is a bigger problem. He hasn't just been deceitful.

[15:13] He's also forgot about God. If you remember, that first journey into Canaan was purely in faith and following God. But now, he's put that aside.

And by going his own way, he's ended up in difficulties. He abandoned his faith and relied on his own logic.

He had sinned against God and he'd been deceitful to his fellow man. There'd be no discussion with God about the way forward. If you can imagine, Abraham had travelled through Canaan.

He would have come across difficulties. And as he's travelling in faith, he would have spoken with God about how do we cope with this? What have I to do now? Where have I to go? Where do we water?

How do I feed the camels, the sheep, the cattle? He trusted in God. And God gave him direction. God led him along the way. And promised him blessings.

[16:18] blessings. That his family would become the founders of a great nation. Now, he had forgotten God's promises at the first real trial.

Abraham had decided on his own solutions and his own answers to go his own way. And he quickly moved from a walk of faith to walking in his own decisions.

Can you imagine the image of Abraham facing the difficulty of the famine? Up until now, he has walked with God. He seems happy with all that God has given him.

Now, the relationship seems to have soured. You can imagine him. He's come away from his family. He's come through dangers.

He thinks that things are going to thrive in the land of plenty. But there's famine. Thanks God for the promises of being the father of a great nation.

[17:26] Thanks for this land of milk and honey. If we don't starve first, where am I going to feed my people, my family and my animals?

Abraham is a thought to himself, I know what I will do. Follow me lads, I'll show you the way. We'll go down to Egypt and we will make our own way in life.

And as Abraham goes this way and God then intervenes and brings him back to our right relationship and to faith in him, we see that this will not be the last time that God will experience difficulties with his chosen people.

We think of again an experience involving Egypt. When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt out of bondage, you would think that they would have been pleased to have finished a life of slavery. And they were initially. They think everything's great. And then suddenly when faced with a challenge, they turn on God and he moans. First of all is they approach the Dead Sea.

[18:47] Their faith disappears and their fear that the Pharaoh will catch up with them and kill them. God opens the sea, permits them to pass through and then drowns the Egyptian army.

He shows his power. power. But a little while later, the people again complain when things become difficult. When food becomes difficult.

So time and again, we read the story of how man is quick to put his faith in God when things are going well. But when things get difficult, we'd rather go our own way and follow our own answers. followers. But when those times come, we tend to put on rose coloured glasses. We forget about the reality of life before we had faith in God.

We have rose coloured glasses that remember is of the good times. But be honest, before we knew Christ as our Saviour, was life really that great?

[19:56] Was everything in the garden rosy? Or did we still have difficulties in business? Did people still get made unemployed? And did people still face times of sickness and death?

Of course they did. We see that when we become Christians, it's not a case of everything in the garden becomes rosy.

That we will have no challenges in life. But rather we have one who can see us through those challenges and who will keep his promises.

Like Abraham, we fail to believe sometimes in the promises of God. We relegate God's promises and promote their own ingenuity.

We raise our own importance up that we can answer and meet all that we need. God's But how often is that situation so wrong?

[21:01] We decide what we need rather than listening to what God tells us we require and what God provides for us. We put ourselves above God and make us the one who's in control.

And yet as we sang in that first psalm tonight, God is the one who created us. In psalm 100 it's quite clear that God made us without our aid.

We are the sheep of his pasture and he is the one who guides us and the one who provides for us. We are his sheep sheep. And the sheep don't dictate to the shepherd the way in which they will go. They might try at times to decide where they want to go. But the shepherd is the one who guides the sheep. He is the one who leads them home and the one who cares for them.

So we go back to the passage. Verse 17 we read God shows that only in him is a guarantee of success.

[22:22] Left to Abraham God's plan would have been finished before it even started. His great nation would have been would never have occurred.

Abraham's plan is a failure.

And therefore we would rather go our own way. We turn our back on the love and the power of God to rely on our self. Abraham's plan is a failure.

And so often when we go our own way if we're honest with ourselves our plans become failures. They become discredited because we are not in control of all things.

We see that Abraham had not covered himself in glory but God still interceded for him. God still intervened.

[23:31] And we're the same. Our wrong doings and our sin most certainly don't cover us in glory. And yet we have a saviour in the Lord Jesus Christ who steps in to intercede for us before God.

So what happens when Abraham is forced out of Egypt? We see that there's almost a shame as he leaves.

Here was a man who had been treated well by the Pharaoh. Suddenly there is no grand farewell. There's no wishing of good luck as you go.

We'll see you again in another time. Rather he's dismissed. Verses 18 to 20 we read Pharaoh called Abraham and said what is this you have done to me?

Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say she is my sister? So I took her for my wife. Now then here is your wife. Take her and go.

[24 : 36] And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had. So there's a dismissal. Almost if you think of watching the TV and you see somebody getting the sack particularly in American dramas.

I don't watch it but I see I watch them on Netflix at times. But somebody gets the sack what's the first thing they're told? Go clear your desk and the security come along and see them out.

Abraham told gather your stuff together and he's basically ushered out the country. Where is the hope? What's happened after Abraham is thrown out of Egypt?

We see actually a story of hope. We see restoration. He retraces his steps back through the Niger, back to Bethel and the where he had first pitched his tents.

And once more he calls up in the name of the Lord. in verse 3 and 5 we read. And as he journeyed from the Niger as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning between Bethel and the A, to the place where he had made an altar at the first.

[26 : 00] And there Abraham called upon the name of the Lord. Abraham retraces his steps, goes back to where he first pitched camp in the land of Canaan.

And he shows a degree of repentance calling upon the Lord, realising his wrongdoings and making a fresh start. Now that was some 4,000 years ago.

Today the world is a very different place. Yet man still faces the same challenges. We still make the same mistake. This world still is faced with famine and hunger.

And it's still far from following God. Man still wants to go his own way. To address the problems of life, we must, we must turn away from our own way and address the problems of our heart.

Because if our hearts drive us away from God, then our hearts are the problem. If we continue to say it's my life and I will run it my way, we will remain distant from God.

[27 : 20] No one, but no one, can make it right. Jesus tells us in John 14, that he is the one and only way to God.

He says, I am the way and the truth and the life. no one comes to the father but by me. There is no other way and certainly not the way of our own hearts.

Like Abraham, we need to recognize that we got it wrong. We need to go back to the beginning and to repent of our wrongdoings. To have a sorrowful heart one that is contrite and open to correction from our Lord.

The good news however is that we no longer have to make continually new sacrifices. Christ on the cross made a sacrifice once and for all for each of us who accept him as our saviour.

You may have doubts, you may feel unworthy that I can't possibly be forgiven for what I've done.

Jesus certainly if he's holy and righteous and sinless doesn't want to know one like me and yet look at Christ's example when he was here on earth.

[28 : 50] Who did he eat with? Who did he mix with? The outcasts of society, tax collectors. Who did he have contact with?

The disabled, the blind, the lepers, those who were seen as unclean. We have an example in Christ who got close to all that society despised, all that society wanted to close out.

He didn't just get close to people, remember, he also took our sin upon himself. That when we declare our faith in him, our sins are forgiven.

And he substituted himself on the cross, that he would pay the penalty for our sins. And Jesus still holds out that same offer tonight, just the same as he did on the cross.

Imagine the humiliation and pain he's going through as he is crucified. and yet he can still offer hope and redemption to one who hangs beside him.

[30 : 06] We see the thief as an example of how we can still come to Christ. Think of the thief. Initially at the start of the crucifixion, both of the criminals mocked Jesus.

one continues to mock him, but the other has a change of heart. And he becomes honest about his situation. He says to his colleague, behave yourself.

We are facing a judgment that is just for our wrong doings. Christ had done nothing wrong, and yet this man who had done nothing wrong hung on the cross beside him.

The thief is honest about his situation. He repents and he takes ownership of his wrong doing. He doesn't blame it on someone else. He doesn't blame it on the political activities of the day. He doesn't blame it on the hard upbringing. He sees judgment that is made upon him just for the things that he has done. And secondly, who recognizes that Jesus is his only means of salvation. [31 : 28] There is nothing that he can do. He's on the cross and he's there till he dies. But he recognizes that Jesus is the one who can forgive him even at this late stage. And he says, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

him. Now, when we're talking here about remember me, we're not about thinking about see, in a couple of years time, and you're looking back in this day, remember what happened, and remember we had this conversation.

Rather, he is pleading, remember me, remember the situation that I am in. He's urging! He's that he be remembered. And finally, we see Jesus' response to the thief. He doesn't mock him, he doesn't turn around and say, well, you're a bit late, you've left it until the last minute. Rather, Jesus accepts what he has said and replies, truly I say to you, today you'll be with me in paradise. Jesus gives him the reassurance that because of his change of heart, because of his repentance and his recognition of Christ as the saviour, that he will be with Christ in paradise, that he will share all that Christ promises.

[33 : 01] And that same hope that is given to the thief on the cross is also available to us if we accept Christ as our saviour. if we put aside doing things our way and singing the song my way and sing rather about following God and giving praise to him and accepting his son as our saviour, we can have hope for all eternity just like the criminal that died beside Christ.

So we see that Abraham was a man of faith who gave up everything to follow God. He's a man who would have faced uncertainties and kept on going.

He's also a human like us who made wrong decisions and at times sinned against God. Just like any one of us.

But it was a man who also came back to Christ that tried to God. Just as we can come back to God through Christ. He came back to God's ways.

He recognised His wrongdoing and he gave praise to God for all that he had promised him and for the opportunity to start again. What hope and what joy we have in the offer of salvation through Jesus Christ.

[34 : 37] What hope and what cause for rejoicing in the promises of God that are unchanging from the day that he first created man to the day when Christ returns.

And in that hope let's just slowly for a moment bow her heads in prayer. Bow heads in prayer. Bow heads in prayer. Bow heads in prayer. Bow heads in prayer. Bow heads in prayer. You