

Battle and Blessing

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Date: 07 June 2026

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[0:00] Please turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 7, 11 through 25. If you need a Bible, you're welcome to take one off the back table and keep it as our gift to you. Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than the one named after the order of Aaron?

For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belong to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.

For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah. In connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.

For it is witnessed of him, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness, for the law made nothing perfect.

But on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him, The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.

[1:22] You are a priest forever. This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. The former priests were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever.

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. This is the word of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord. It's read from Hebrews chapter 7.

It sheds light for us on Genesis 14. So if you were confused, yes, I am preaching on Genesis chapter 14 today, not on Hebrews 7. But I wanted to spare anyone from having to pronounce all the difficult names in Genesis 14.

And I also wanted you to hear how Hebrews illuminates our understanding of this mysterious priest king, Melchizedek, who appears seemingly out of thin air and then vanishes.

[2:27] But before we get to Melchizedek, we have 16 verses of epic war movie-making material that would probably be a box office hit if anybody actually took up the challenge to make a movie on this chapter of the Bible.

Four tyrant kings from the east rule over the Palestinian Transjordan region. And after years of subjugation, five kings mount up, they join forces to mount a rebellion.

And this results in this war campaign of the eastern kings leading to a battle of nine armies. And then the eastern kings win this decisive victory and they carry off people in possessions, including Abram's nephew, Lot.

And then what we see in the passage is that Abram leads this covert special forces mission by night. He launches a surprise attack and, incredibly, he defeats this alliance of eastern kings. He recovers people and possessions, including his nephew, Lot. And it's at this point in the story that he's met by Melchizedek on his return journey home. Now, we're going to await to see what happens with Melchizedek.

[3:38] This fascinating story, if you can get past all the names and places that are kind of obscure and we don't know about, it is actually a fascinating plot line. And when reading through this chapter

in the past, though, because of all the names, because of all the places that are in here, I've, in my own Bible reading, I've nodded my head and gone, wow, that seems like an awesome story.

I have no idea what it's talking about. Let's move on to Genesis 15. Genesis 15 is a crucial chapter in the Bible. And, I mean, why is Genesis 14 in the Bible?

Like, is it just for entertainment value? Is it just to provide historical context? And that's what we're after today, to answer that question. Why is this here?

And what does it mean for us today? I mean, those are the questions we ask when we approach any biblical text. Why is this here? What does it mean? What does it mean for us today? Now, the title of today's sermon is Battle and Blessing.

Now, before we dive into the text, let's go to the Lord in prayer one more time. And, Father, this is truly your word. We were just singing about our God, who is the living word, and that is Christ. But this here is the written word of God that you have given to us.

[4:47] And it is for our good. It's for our instruction. It's for our upbuilding in Christ. And so we want this morning to submit ourselves under the authority of your word. God, do that work in our hearts today, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. So today, we're first going to walk through the narrative together, section by section, to understand, again, what is happening, what's the point, and then at the end, we're going to consider how this actually applies to us in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so here we go. You guys ready? We're going to walk through this narrative together. And in the first 12 verses, we read about this battle of nine armies. So maybe keep a finger or keep a note card or something in Hebrews 7.

We're going to go back there later. But turn in the Bible to Genesis 14, and we're going to read now in these verses. And just a tip, if you're ever not sure how to pronounce crazy names and you're in a group setting, just speak confidently and keep moving.

Nobody really knows. Even the Hebrew scholars, like every translation I listen to, they say things differently. So here we go. In the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar, Ariak, king of Elasar, Keterleomer, king of Elam, and Tidal, king of Goem, these kings made war with Bera, king of Sodom, Bersha, king of Gomorrah, Shinab, king of Adma, Shemeber, king of Zebaiim, and the king of Bela, that is Zoar.

[6:13] And all these joined forces in the valley of Siddam, that is the Salt Sea. Now, these initial verses describe the battle lines. I should have had that up there, sorry.

The battle lines being drawn. And so with all these names of ancient kings and places, a map is actually quite useful this week. And so I know it's a little small, but those kings, the eastern, I'm calling them the eastern king.

They're really northeastern. They're from Mesopotamia. And they would have come from like off the map in the other direction. Okay? And they come down. And we have the other kings, what I'm going to call the Dead Sea kings. Sodom, Gomorrah, all these.

I'm trying to get my barons here. Here's the Dead Sea. So all these kings are from over here. The eastern kings are coming down. And eventually, they make this big loop, which we'll read about in a minute. And they join forces here at the Valley of Siddam.

So that's where the battle is going to take place. Now, after setting the scene in these first few verses, we're then shown sort of the background lead up.

[7:13] And I'll have that map up there again. But the lead up to the battle. And so look at your Bibles in verses 4 through 7. Twelve years, they had served Keterleomer. Now, these are the Dead Sea kings.

That's the alliance of five kings. But in the 13th year, they rebelled. In the 14th year, Keterleomer and the kings who were with them, so those eastern kings came and defeated a whole bunch of names again.

The Rephaim and Ashtaroth-Karnaim, the Zuzim and Ham, the Emim and Shavakiriathim, and the Horites in their hill country of Ser, as far as El Peron, on the border of the wilderness.

Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat, that is Kadesh, and defeated all the country of the Amalekites and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-Tamor. Okay, so I want to show the map again.

Now, the Israelites would have known, the Israelites receiving this word, they would have known where all these places are, and you can actually read about almost all these places are mentioned

in the book of Deuteronomy. The conquest of the land is happening.

[8:13] Well, what you need to know is a lot of those names were people described as giants, as really strong people. And the eastern kings just come down, and they march through on this war campaign.

They defeat all those people. They make it all the way down here to this eastern bunny ear of the Red Sea. There's a wilderness down here. And then they come back up. They defeat the Amalekites. Name you might probably remember from your reading of scripture.

They defeat the Amorites. And now they're going to join up against those Dead Sea kings at the Valley of Siddam. And so what we should think about is there's unrest going on in this region.

There's some really strong kings that apparently are very powerful that just march through on this war campaign. The Dead Sea kings are mounting up to, you know, they mount up a rebellion. But I have a question for us.

Who is this, if we think, step back, think bigger picture, who is this portion of Genesis about? Who is the main protagonist of the story? Abram.

[9:13] Abram. So let's think God, yes. Thank you. Humanly speaking. How does the movement of kings and kingdoms and their war campaigns affect Abram?

They are dealing in territory that God has promised to give to Abram and his offspring forever, right? Lift up your eyes. This is what God said last week.

Chapter 13. Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are. Abram was standing in Bethel up on Mountain Heights up there. And God says, lift up your eyes. Look northward, southward, eastward, westward.

And he says, all the land that you see, I will give to you and your offspring forever. And now we have these fierce international forces upsetting the peace and the stability of the region, threatening the fulfillment of God's promise to Abram.

So let's think about that as we keep moving here. The narrative moves forward in verses 8 through 12. And it shows us the battle itself and then the outcome now. So look in your Bibles or look on the screen.

[10:18] Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Adma, the king of Zeboim, and the king of Bala, that is Zoar, went out. And they joined battle in the valley of Siddam with Keter-Leomer, king of Elam, Tidal, king of Goem, Amraphel, king of Shinar, and Ariok, king of Elstar.

Four kings against five. Now the valley of Siddam was full of bitumen pits. And as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country.

So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their provisions and went their way. They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom and his possessions, and went their way.

Okay, so we see here the enemy's victory. Those eastern kings, they decisively defeat the Dead Sea kings whose forces are reduced not only in battle but by these bitumen pits.

These are pits of natural tartar or, I'm sorry, tar or, what am I trying to say here? Asphalt or, yeah, tar, kind of petroleum. And so having won this decisive victory, those kings march off with the spoils of their victory, the people, the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah.

[11:29] And this includes now Abram's nephew, Lot. So if you want to wake the sleeping giant Abram, you take his kinsman, Lot. Now if you've been here the last few weeks, if you've been walking with us through this narrative, then you remember how Abram and Lot, they were journeying together, right?

And their flocks got so large that there was a dispute, you know, my sheep was here first, this is my land. And so Abram, we saw with striking generosity last week, he offered Lot the first dibs of the land.

And do you remember where Lot chose last week? He chose a journey east, right? If you look in chapter 13, verses 11 through 13, Lot journeyed east.

It says, Now, Moses tells us, Now remember how we talked about last week how Abram was seen with the eyes of faith.

And Lot was seen merely with physical eyes. He makes this selfish, foolish choice. And I want you to think about, we see a progression in Lot.

[12:40] He goes from seeing the land, to choosing the land, to camping near the land, and now he's dwelling in the land. And we see in this week's text how quickly that prize that he chose for himself has now been lost.

Well, in spite of Lot's selfish, foolish choice, Abram rescues him. And this is the next movement of the story. So look in your Bibles at verse 13.

Then one who had escaped came and told Abram, the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram.

Okay, so the first thing here, Abram receives word. I want you to know three things from this verse. First, in God's providence, someone escapes the eastern kings and he goes all the way to Abram. Now, we don't know what prompted him to go there. Maybe Lot told him, hey, go see my uncle, Abram. He's got a lot of people and we don't know. In God's providence, someone escapes and tells Abram. Second, in contrast to Lot, who's been dwelling in Sodom, Abram is living, aka camping, tent dwelling, among these famous oak trees.

[13:58] I guess they were pretty large oak trees, maybe a small forest. So Lot's dwelling in Sodom. Abram is still living his tent dwelling life that we talked about last week. Third, Abram has allies among the Amorite people.

And so this alliance proves to be fairly effective as we see in the next couple verses when Abram raids the enemy. Verse 14, We've got a lot of military folks in this room.

Are you not impressed with Abram? Okay, do you remember just a few chapters ago when Abram came down to Egypt? He was this vulnerable refugee. He was running for his life, fleeing from a famine.

What happened to that Abram? Right? He's essentially now a tribal king. He's got massive amounts of wealth, massive amounts of livestock, literally an army of servants who were trained in his own house.

I mean, this is not the way we typically think of Abraham the patriarch. And then he pursues here these eastern kings. It says, as far as Dan. So Dan would be, this is a different map because it shows Abram's journey.

[15:20] Dan is up there in the north. That would become the northernmost boundary of Israel. And the Israelites know that. So they would understand that. He goes all the way up there and he stages this legendary night raid.

He strategically divides his forces. He attacks under the cover of darkness. He gains the upper hand. And then it says he pursues the coalition of kings even further up towards Damascus.

I mean, this is Navy SEALs kind of stuff. Right? Only Abram doesn't have night vision goggles or assault rifles. This is amazing. I also suspect that drones weren't involved here.

But, I mean, this is basically like Navy SEAL stuff. And what happens? What's the result? He recovers everything, including Lot. Verse 16. Then he brought back all the possessions and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions and the women and the people.

I mean, let's go, Abram. Right? Now, on the surface, what strikes us is this military might of Abram. The military genius that he exhibits.

[16:32] But I think we need to peer under the hood and see what's actually motivating this action. And that's what I want to ask. What is driving Abram to do this?

And I want to suggest two things. First, what actually, what is the thing that draws Abram into action? What was it? Lot's captured.

Right? This family connection is emphasized three times. Okay. Verse 12. They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother. Verse 14. When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive.

Right? That's his kinsman. Verse 16. Then he brought back his kinsman Lot. And so we see Abram is taking bold action, not at all for his own sake, but entirely for the sake of his family.

Right? He's risking, as one commentator puts it, he's risking life and fortune in a display of loving loyalty. Like, this is another expression of that same generous, self-giving love that led Abram last week to offer Lot first dibs of the land.

[17:41] Right? And so what's driving Abram? The first thing I think is driving Abram is his self-giving love for Lot. His self-giving love for Lot. But I think there's one more level deeper.

And that's this, and we're going to keep seeing this. His faith in God's word and promises. Last week we saw his faith falter. Heading down to Egypt in the famine, lying about his wife.

And yet God proved himself faithful anyway. God delivered Abram from a bad situation that he had gotten himself into. And then Abram, we saw he renewed his faith back at the altar of worship before the Lord.

And then God confirmed the promises to him. God confirmed the land will be your offsprings forever. Your offspring will be as numerous as the dust of the earth. And now we're seeing the continued impact of Abram's faith in God's word and promises.

Abram knows now that God is sovereign. Abram knows that God is faithful. Abram knows that God will indeed fulfill his promises. And this frees him up to take this bold, loving action as he clings to God's word rather than the things of this world.

[18:54] And this reality becomes all the more apparent in this last and final scene. The pagan king and the priest king. The pagan king and the priest king. Look at verses 17 through 18 with me.

I feel like you guys needed more coffee this morning. Man, it's quiet out here. Is it too hot? Look at verse 17. So Abram's greeted by these two kings.

He's marching back home with the spoils of his victory. And he's met by these two contrasting kings. There's a lot of contrast going on in this passage. There's the wicked king of Sodom who goes out to meet Abram.

And there's the king of Salem who brings out bread and wine. So think about this. You have the one king of Sodom who was defeated, who lost, who Abraham just recovered all of his people and possessions.

And so he goes out empty-handed to Abram. You have the king of Salem who appears out of nowhere, who comes bringing this feast, this royal feast, to present to Abram and the troops that were with him.

[20:12] And this king of Salem is enshrouded in mystery. Again, like where did he come from? He hasn't been mentioned yet in Genesis. If you keep reading in Genesis or Exodus or Leviticus or Numbers or keep going, you're not going to find anything about him for a long time.

Furthermore, we learn here he was priest of God Most High. Priest of God Most High? Now this is a title, the title that's used there.

Other pagan nations would actually use a similar title for their own gods. But Moses makes really clear in this text that it's referring to the one true God. It's referring to Abram's God, to Israel's God, Yahweh, the Lord.

And so apparently this king of Salem is also a priest. He's a priest king. He's got two offices, king, priest, and he's a priest of the Lord.

And so apparently there's other worshipers of Yahweh, right? Abram's not the only worshiper of Yahweh, which is something we need to take note of. Despite all of the sin that has spread throughout the earth, there are still others indeed that are worshiping the one true God.

[21:18] And now we see here in the next couple verses, Melchizedek's blessing, and then Abram's response of a tithe. Look at verse 19.

And he, Melchizedek, blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram by God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. The whole narrative of Genesis 14 really climaxes in this moment, in this blessing of Abraham.

Now, if you've been here, we've learned in Genesis the paramount importance of blessing. It's the favor of God. It's his goodwill towards mankind.

That mankind was made to dwell under. We were made at creation to dwell under the blessing of God. And then we lost that blessing when mankind sinned and was kicked out of the garden.

[22:17] We've been chasing that blessing, right? We've been following the thread of God's blessing. And God has been choosing, still in spite of sin, to bestow his blessing as he wills on those who seek him by faith.

If you remember in chapter 9, Noah blessed Shem. And so we see there's a godly line of promise that's being blessed. This is confirming, yes, Abram is from that godly line.

He is the offspring of Shem, who is being blessed by the Lord. Melchizedek doesn't just bless Abram, though. He also blesses God Most High, which is, in effect, praising and extolling God.

And so in this, he's recognizing that God is the one, look, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. He's looking at the events that just transpired and saying, Abram, it wasn't ultimately your tactics, your trained men, your power.

It was God who is the possessor or creator of heaven and earth, the God who reigns supreme over the kings and the nations of this world. He's the one that brought victory to you just now.

[23 : 26] And see the turn that the passage has really quickly taken. This was a story of international conflict, a military conquest, this awesome night raid. It has quickly become a story exalting in the living creator God, the one who bestows blessing, the one who secures victory for his chosen ones.

And Abram responds to Melchizedek's blessing by giving him this tithe. So that would be 10% of everything that Abram recovered from the victory he gives to Melchizedek.

So in this act, Abram, he's validating Melchizedek's words. He's saying yes and amen to what Melchizedek just said. He's also, you know, God had promised Abram that you're going to be blessed, you're going to be a blessing to others, and those who bless you will be blessed.

And we're seeing this all over the passage. Abram is being a blessing to others, and Melchizedek, who's blessing him, is now getting blessed back. This is God's promise being fulfilled before Abram's eyes.

And it's also a foreshadowing here. Abram is tithing to a priest under the Levitical law, the Mosaic law. The priest will get tithes from the people of Israel. And then we see, after this, in stark contrast to Melchizedek, we see in the final few verses, Sodom's offer and Abram's refusal.

[24 : 50] So look in your Bibles at verse 21 through 24. And the king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.

But Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted my hand to the Lord God most high, possessor 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.

I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre take their share. Melchizedek's first two words were, Blessed be.

And the king of Sodom's are, Give me. The king of Sodom shows zero gratitude for the fact that Abram just risked everything to go and rescue his people, his possessions, after his defeat.

Now the offer itself, you keep the goods, I keep the people, it's not a bad offer, but it's purely transactional. And whereas Abram had said yes and amen to Melchizedek, he's basically saying, yeah, no thanks to the king of Sodom.

[25 : 58] And he says why here. He says why he's rejecting it. I love how the CSB study Bible puts it this way, Abram would not let the king diminish God's glory by taking credit for Abram's prosperity.

So once again, we find Abram in faith, forsaking things of this world, right, even things that by right are his. Like he recovered these people in possessions.

He says, I want none of it. I want none of it. My portion is God most high. My portion is the blessing that God is bestowing on me.

I will wait. I will wait on God's word and promises. And so here at the end of this crazy chapter, we see that God's unmoving power over nations and God's faithfulness to his promises, it motivates unmoving faith in his people.

And that's what we see here in Abraham. God's unmoving power over nations and faithfulness to his promises motivate unmoving faith in his people. And I think Melchizedek points the way to where this reality is seen most clearly, which is in the greater deliverance through the greater priest king.

[27 : 10] Now this is where you can turn over to Hebrews chapter seven again. We'll get there in just a second. Melchizedek is this mysterious priest king of Salem and Salem is Jerusalem.

Okay, they just chopped off the first part of it. He's the king of Salem, the king of Jerusalem. About a thousand years later, because we're around 2000 BC right now, around a thousand years later, when the very first Israelite king sat on the throne, King David, not the first king of Israel, but the first one to sit on the throne in Jerusalem, right?

They moved the capital of Jerusalem. He's sitting on the throne of Jerusalem and he sees in Melchizedek this foreshadowing of the Messiah to come. And so David writes prophetically in Psalm 110 verse four, the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Strange verse, but David's prophesying something. There is a merging of king and priest that the Messiah is going to fulfill. He's going to be both of those. And then we read in Hebrews, the author of Hebrews looks back at that verse and then looks back at Christ and says Jesus Christ has

fulfilled that prophetic word of King David.

Jesus Christ has become the priest king after the order of Melchizedek. If you look in Hebrews seven, verses two and three, Melchizedek's name means king of righteousness.

[28 : 38] And then he is also king of Salem, that is king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the son of God, he continues a priest forever.

Jesus Christ is the true king of righteousness, the true king of peace. See, whereas Melchizedek seemed to have no beginning, he seems to have no genealogy, but he did have a beginning and he did have a genealogy.

Jesus Christ truly has no beginning nor end, being himself as the Nicene Creed states, God from God, light from light, true God from God, begotten, not made.

Unlike the later Levitical priests, the priests under the law of Moses, Christ has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.

The former priests were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever.

[29 : 49] Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost. He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them.

That is the greater priest-king, Jesus Christ, after the order of Melchizedek. And what does Jesus save us from? In Genesis 14, God brings Abram victory over earthly kings.

But Jesus Christ, the greater priest-king after the order of Melchizedek, he brings victory over our ultimate enemies, our greatest enemies, not human kings, but sin and Satan and death and hell.

And Christ breaks the power of them all. And he does that through his own death. And Christ secured the greatest deliverance by himself dying on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for our sins, absorbing our sin, absorbing our guilt in himself on the cross, and then rising again to indestructible life.

So friends, since Christ is a priest who never dies, his blood shed once for all speaks a word of forgiveness, a word which cannot be undone.

[31 : 04] He's speaking that word right now in heaven, the Father's right hand, on your behalf if you have faith in him. He's speaking that word. You will forever. He's a priest who never dies. He's a king who reigns forever.

And we, his citizens, are going to enjoy unending righteousness, unending peace in the age to come. And that breaks forward into the here and now through the church of Jesus Christ.

Friends, this great deliverance by this great priest king, this proves to us God's unmoving power over the nations. It proves to us God's unwavering faithfulness to his promises.

The whole storyline of the Bible, this book, the whole storyline that we read here, it shows us how God in sovereign grace has orchestrated all of human history to climax in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He was moving people's nations, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the nation of Israel. They are all pawns in God's game here. It's redemption. God has brought it about and it climaxed in Jesus Christ.

[32 : 09] He's wielding evil even to bring about his good purposes. He's sovereign over everything. And he's faithful because the promises that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ are the promises we're reading about in the book of Genesis that he's brought fulfillment to.

God's unmoving power over nations, his faithfulness to his promises, that motivates unmoving faith in his people. And so friends, in light of these things, I just want to call those in this room who have not yet to put your faith in our priest king, Jesus Christ.

Put your faith in our priest king, Jesus Christ. See, in this life, we look for deliverance in all kinds of things, right? We look for deliverance in struggles that we're facing. We look for deliverance in achieving a certain standard of security or accomplishments in our work, deliverance from the ridicule of others.

The ultimate deliverance, the deliverance that we need is deliverance that only Jesus provides. And he's brought it to us through his death, his once for all death on the cross. The deliverance that you need is not deliverance from a bad boss.

It's not deliverance from family that you're in conflict. It's deliverance from sin. And Christ brings that deliverance. Put your faith in him today. If you don't know what that looks like, please come talk to me or one of the other elders after the service.

[33 : 30] Put your faith in our priest king, Jesus. Saints, here's the next thing that we see here. Stand fast in faith when tyrant kings rule.

Stand fast in faith when tyrant kings rule. Now, when I say when tyrant kings rule, I mean when life circumstances are out of our control. This chapter demonstrates God's unflinching control even over the geopolitical landscape of the world.

That is his sovereign power over the movement of kings and kingdoms and nations. These things were going on outside of Abram's control. And similar things are going on right now way outside of our control.

The increasing polarity in our nation that leads to hatred and violence, that is outside of our control. You and me, we can do a little bit about it here. We can't do a whole lot about it in our country. The ongoing wars overseas are way outside of your control or mine. Are they not? The rise and fall of presidents and political parties. And there are all kinds of other life circumstances that are similarly outside of our control.

[34 : 43] What parents or siblings you're stuck with outside of your control. God placed you in a family. He gave you a brother and a sister, a mom and a dad.

You didn't choose them, did you? So, where your next Navy or Coast Guard orders will be, I mean you can apply and put in for it, right?

Kind of outside your control. Whether you'll ever be able to afford the house that you want, physical struggles, mental health struggles, behavioral issues in your kids.

We have some measure of control over some of these things. So much of it is beyond our control. The question, saints, that we're confronted with in any of these or myriad more life circumstances beyond our control is this.

Do we believe that God reigns supreme? Do we believe, I don't mean theoretically, I mean in your situation, the circumstances that you're thinking of right now, not just theory, your life.

[35 : 48] Does God reign supreme? Is he superintending over and governing over all things, including the details of your life? And is he doing that for your good, for your sake?

Or do you relegate your faith in Jesus to just like this thing that we do here at church? The afterlife, like I know I'm going to heaven, I know we worship Jesus here in church.

Throughout the week, all those details, they're outside of his control. I mean, is that how your faith faith operates? Saints, God is not a city cop bound to city limits.

He is the possessor of heaven and earth. The possessor of heaven and earth. You know, it's striking in Genesis 14 how God's actually not really mentioned until the very end of the chapter. So it seems as if all these events are going on apart from any of his intervention, but then at the end, through the mouth of his priest king, we realize actually God's providence has been operative that entire time, that whole time.

[37 : 01] And so brothers and sisters, many of you have experienced similar aha moments when looking back at a trial, looking back at a life circumstance, you realize that God was actually there every step of the way.

You just didn't have eyes to see it. I'm right there with you. We didn't have eyes to see it in the moment, but I'm convinced that when we get to heaven someday, we're going to be looking back at our lives with this renewed perspective and be like, wow, God was there and God was there and God was there and God was there and I didn't think that he was there, but he is, he was.

Church, God's power, his faithfulness has been demonstrated throughout history. It was magnified at the cross of Jesus Christ and it will be on full display when he returns. And so this motivates unmoving, unwavering faith in us, church, so that we can stand fast even when tyrant kings rule, even when our life circumstances feel beyond our control.

You know, a verse that I have been clinging to the last few years, Psalm 112, verse 7. I would commend this verse to memorize to you guys. The whole chapter is about how the righteous will never be moved. That's the title, at least in the ESV.

Verse 7 says this, speaking of the righteous, which were righteous by faith, not by works. Those who are righteous by faith in Christ. He is not afraid of bad news. His heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.

[38:26] He is not afraid of bad news. Whatever that bad news is for you, he is not afraid of bad news. His heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. Okay, here's the next thing. Express your faith in self-giving love.

Abram demonstrates this extreme self-giving love, right? He puts everything on the line for the sake of his nephew Lot and saints, we're called to do the same thing for others, especially those in the household of faith.

1 John 3, 16, by this we know love, that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. Jesus Christ, our priest king, he set for us the ultimate example.

He laid down his life for us while we were his enemies and he says, go and do the same. Follow in my footsteps. Love one another with radical, self-giving love.

That's the defining mark of Christians. That's what it's supposed to be, the love of Jesus Christ. This love is a love that's willing to be inconvenienced.

[39:26] It takes bold, risky action for the sake of the beloved. It's a love that covers over the offenses of others. Some of you need to hear that today. It covers over the offenses of others.

It's quick to forgive. It's always ready for reconciliation. It's a love that refuses to hold on to anger and allow resentment to build in the heart. This is the love of Jesus. It's a love that puts the interest of others first, counts others more significant than self.

It's a love that's ready to lay down rights for the sake of others. It's a love that always seeks to build up to achieve the ultimate good of the beloved.

Friends, what I'm describing is an otherworldly love. It's a love that despite our culture's claims that love is love, our culture will never attain this love apart from faith in the living God, the God who is himself, the definition of love.

And so, saints, may we, by our examples of self-giving, Christ-like love, compel the world to receive that same love for themselves. And you know, to do this, we need help.

[40:36] We need the Spirit's help. So every single day, we need to get on our knees before the Lord and say, God, put my flesh to death and let me put on Christ. Let me put on Jesus Christ.

Give me his love, Holy Spirit. And we remind ourselves of this love continually by rehearsing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like we see the love of Jesus on full display in the gospel.

And the gospel also reminds us of one more thing. This is the last application point. That lasting treasure is not of this world. We're called to express our faith by seeking lasting treasure.

And the gospel reminds us of this. You know, Abram had so thoroughly renounced his claim to things of this world that he was willing not only to give Lot first dibs of the land in chapter 13, not only to risk his life and fortune to go after Lot and get him from the kings, but also at the end of the chapter, he rejects this enticing offer from the king of Sodom.

He says, no, I don't want it. Abram was free. Abram was truly free. Now that does not sound at all like freedom to our culture.

[41:52] Freedom, according to our culture, which is highlighted this month, is the ability to do whatever I please, to express myself in whatever way feels right. But true freedom, friends, true freedom is the ability to do what fulfills my God-given purpose.

That's freedom. Unshackled by my pride, unshackled by my own selfish ambition, it's the ability to live according to my design, which God has determined, not me.

God determined my design. He made me. He breathed life into my bones. He knows what I'm made for. And I'm designed, we saw this in the book of Genesis, I'm designed to reflect him, to reflect his heart, his character, his goodness to the world and to spread and multiply that for his glory and the good of others.

And so, friends, as long as I am grasping after things of this world, thinking that in those things is satisfaction, in those things is my worth, I'm never going to be free to live according to the way God has designed me.

But when I realize that satisfaction is found in Jesus, that he is my highest treasure, he is my portion, he is my good, and he's preparing for me a place in heaven, right, full of blessing, absent of sin and death, when I realize that, then I'm open-handed with the things that I possess, right?

[43:14] My possessions become opportunities to steward for God's glory and the good of others. For here, we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. That's what Abram was doing.

It's Hebrews 13, 14. Friends, our earthly treasures are all going to go up in flames. Our houses, whether they were too small or just right or bigger than we wanted or all of our awesome Lego creations, our cars, your military rank, our sports awards, our college degrees, all of these things are going to burn up in flames.

But in the ways that we stewarded them, in the ways that we use them and all of our resources towards the purposes of God, we're going to be rewarded with lasting treasure that moth or rust can't destroy.

And this is, this is the tent-dwelling, altar-building life that we were talking about last week. It's a life that springs from faith. And where does that faith come from? It comes from this, from God's unmoving power over the nations, his faithfulness to his promises.

That's, that's where our faith springs up out of. And so friends, it's a, it's a faith that stands fast in circumstances beyond our control. It's a faith that loves with self-giving love.

[44 : 37] It's a faith that seeks lasting treasure. Faith that was made possible through our priest-king Jesus Christ who has delivered us from our greatest enemies and he has made us sons of God most high.

possessor of heaven and earth. Let's pray.