

The Seed of Abraham

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[0 : 00] With Bethel on the west and Ahiah on the east.! There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.! Then Abram set out and continued towards him.

Thank you, Josephine. Father, help us. Help us now to be attentive to your word and to be changed by it. In Jesus' name. Amen.

So the question we are looking at this morning is where should we look for hope in a broken world? I'm sure there's many of us this morning coming here with different beliefs, different places this morning.

But I think there's one thing we can all agree on, is that we live in a broken world, don't we? In need of hope. And we look to all sorts of things for hope, don't we?

Family and relationships, perhaps. Popularity, success. Pleasure, leisure. Maybe it's our work, education, money.

[1 : 16] Perhaps it's technology. Trying to solve the problems that we deal with. Or maybe it even is something like religion. But the problem is these things often let us down, don't they?

Family and relationships, people let us down. When we go for popularity and success, we're left anxious, worried about what people think of us. When we live through experiences, we're left longing for more.

When we're putting our hope in our work and our education and our money, we're constantly tired, never satisfied. And let's be honest, there's things that we just can't control.

Technology can't solve all our problems, can it? It can't stop aging. And often, religion just leaves us confused, frustrated when God seems distant, disconnected.

Now, even as a child, I could see this. I remember at the age of 12, I'd looked for hope being popular at school, being physically fit, being part of a successful football team, being in a romantic relationship, being smart and successful academically.

[2 : 36] But I was struggling, I was anxious, I was never at peace. And then when my grandparents both died, suddenly, I was left feeling empty, helpless, hopeless.

What's the point if at the end of the day, we just end up in the ground and everything we work for is lost? So, in a broken world, where should we look for hope?

Is there reason for hope? Well, I imagine the man we're introduced to in today's passage in verse 1, Abraham, was asking a similar question.

Abraham, later renamed Abraham, was asking this very question. He'd probably heard stories passed down generations about the promise that God would one day provide someone who would bring an end to the curse.

We thought about that last week. He reversed the brokenness of this world. But that probably seemed a bit empty now. Take a look at verse 4.

[3 : 45] Abraham was 75 years old. He's old. And if you just look over to chapter 11, verse 30, we see that him and his wife, Sarai, were childless.

Now, that might not seem like a big thing right to us, maybe. But I'm guessing if anyone here has ever been in that situation where they've not been able to bear a child, they will know the pain and grief that comes from being in that situation.

But in the ancient world, it was a far bigger deal because actually having an heir, having a child, was very much a sign of God's favour, God's blessing.

It was how you preserved your family honour, the family name. And so to be childless in many ways for Abraham and for Sarah felt pretty hopeless.

So where could he look for hope in a broken world when humanly speaking, there was no hope?

Where could he go? Where can we go?

[4 : 56] Well, the good news is that what God is saying to us this morning is that there really is reason for hope because God has made a promise that actually today we can have more confidence in because we can see it's already being fulfilled.

And the promise is this. God will bless all nations through Abraham's seed. If you've got a handout, there's an outline on it if you want to follow through.

But let's just look at the first part of that together now. God will bless all nations. Let's take a look down at verse one with me in chapter 12.

The Lord had said to Abraham, go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you and I will make you into a great nation.

I will bless you and I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. Let's just stop there for a moment. Just take in what that promise is saying.

[6 : 06] I will make you a great nation. Rather than being defined by the shame and lack of favour with God, he will now be defined as someone who has amazing favour.

Someone who has a great heritage. Someone who clearly has favour with God and God's personal care and protection. I will bless you and make your name great.

Staggering to reflect on God's mercy here. His grace. Abraham did nothing to deserve this. He worshipped other gods actually we learn. He dishonoured God.

Yet God chooses to bless him and to bring hope out of his hopelessness. Humanly speaking, this promise was impossible.

He was 75 years old and he had no child. How could a great nation come from him? But that is the point.

[7 : 11] The point is God can do the impossible. He can bring hope out of hopelessness. And verse 3, we notice the promise isn't just narrowed on this one man, but it's far wider.

Verse 3 says, God continues, I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you.

All nations. Again, this is astonishing. Because if we read earlier, just a chapter earlier, mankind had just rebelled, come together against God.

trying to rival God, take control, be like God. And it's in the context of this rebellion that God says, no, I am still committed to blessing the world.

Even though sin will try and stop my plans, nothing can stop my plans to bless the world. God's purpose always has and will be to bring blessing to all the world.

[8 : 28] He's not an exclusive God. And that's encouraging, isn't it? No one here this morning is excluded from God's promise of blessing.

That might be new for some of us to hear. Perhaps some of us think that Christianity is a Western or a Middle Eastern religion. But no. The God who made the world is a God of all nations.

He's the one who can give life, who can bring life out of the impossible. Make a nation out of a childless couple. The promise of Abraham is a promise we can all share in regardless of heritage.

Now, despite this amazing inclusivity, there is something that's very exclusive about this promise. Because God will bless all nations through Abraham's seed.

Look carefully at verse three again. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you.

[9 : 47] Literally through or in Abraham. What does this mean? It means that God has chosen to bless this one individual to make him a great nation so that he would be the source of blessing to all nations.

Now, what does he mean by this? Well, I think as we go on, we see a bit more clearly what he means. So Abraham gets up and he goes towards the land.

And then in verse seven, as he gets there, the Lord appears to him again and said, to your offspring, or more literally seed, I will give this land.

So Abraham's traveled to this land, the place where the blessing would come, and God affirms his promise to him. But he says, to your offspring, that is to one of your descendants, I will give this land.

I will bring this blessing about. The point is, God's promise of blessing will be fulfilled by one of Abraham's descendants.

[11 : 05] And so the question we're all left asking is who will this person be? And really, as you read through the rest of the Old Testament, which is the older part of the Bible, the next 2,000 years

after this promise was made to Abraham, we're left asking this same question.

Who is this child of promise going to be? Who's going to be the source of blessing to all nations? Now, one thing's for sure.

It isn't just any seed of Abraham. Now, I don't know about you, that there might be things in your family that get passed down to certain individuals, and they can only be passed down to certain individuals, perhaps like some family jewellery or something.

You might have many offspring, but only one of your offspring will have the jewellery. Now, that's a bit of a silly example, but God's promise was a very specific promise to be passed down through one line.

And why do I say this? Well, actually, we have examples of this given later, in this same book. If you turn with me to chapter 17, just briefly, just a few pages over, time was getting on.

[12:24] Abraham and Sarah were worried that God wouldn't keep his promise, and so they decided to have a child by one of Sarah's servants, Hagar.

And so they did. They had a child, and they called him Ishmael. And in verse 18, Abraham says to God, oh, if only Ishmael might live under your blessing, that he might be the one who brings the blessing to the nations.

but see what God says in verse 19. Then God says, yes, but your wife Sarah will obey you, son, and you will call him Isaac.

I will establish my covenant, my promise, with him as an everlasting covenant, as for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you.

I will surely bless him. I will make him fruitful and greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of 12 rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear you by this time next year.

[13:34] The point is, God's promise of blessing is not just through anybody. It's through the child of promise, the one who God says this promise is going to come through.

And so it goes through the rest of the Old Testament. There are moments when we think, could this be it? Abraham's seed, Isaac, gives birth to Jacob who has 12 sons. And then they come out of slavery into this land.

And you start to wonder, could this be it? But then it soon becomes clear it really isn't it. Because they fail. They fail to live up to their calling.

And rather than being a blessing to the nations, they become like the nations. rebelling against God. And so anticipation continues to build. Who is this seed going to be?

We're led through many people to David, to Solomon. And Solomon, a great king, nations coming to him. But even Solomon fails.

[14:44] He falls. The kingdom is left divided. and God's people, rather than being a blessing to the nations, end up being sent away to the nations.

Never really, well, some of them return, but it was never as good after that as it was before. And that's how the Old Testament ends. With this anticipation.

Who is this seed of Abraham going to be? Well, the good news is we are no longer waiting because the seed has come.

And that seed is Jesus, who is Christ. in the New Testament, Matthew, when he writes his account of Jesus' life, the good news, starts with a genealogy.

Now, so us as modern readers, we might find that a bit strange, but it's because he wants to make it really clear this very point. Matthew writes, the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

[16:04] You see, Matthew wants to identify this promise to Abraham as being fulfilled in Jesus. Paul, when he writes in Galatians, is writing a similar point.

In Galatians 3.16, Paul says how the promises were made to Abraham and to the seed. Now, the scriptures does not say to seeds.

That's the point we've just made. It's not just to anyone who's a descendant of Abraham, but to the child of promise, to your seed, meaning the one person who is Christ.

Christ. The point is, the seed of Abraham has come. The point is, 2,000 years later, is that the seed of Abraham has come.

Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day of blessing. We no longer need to wait for a saviour. This is actually why Christmas is such good news, worth celebrating, because the saviour has

come.

[17 : 17] Abraham never saw it in his day. The Old Testament people, they waited 2,000 years for this day to come. Now, we can see it. It's happened.

So, where should we look for hope in a broken world? Well, the answer is Jesus, Abraham's seed, who is Christ. He is the answer the whole world has been waiting for and needs to come to if we are to have real hope in a broken world.

But it's not good enough for us just to know this, okay? Because if we want to share in that blessing, we here this morning must receive the promise by faith in Christ.

when God made this promise to Abraham 4,000 years ago, if we go back to 12, verse 1, the Lord said to Abraham, go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

That is, the Lord told him to go, to leave his old life behind, to leave his home, to leave those he dearly loved and to embrace the promise that God had given him to travel to this new land where he could experience God's blessing.

[18 : 44] You know, if someone offers you something, a house or something, you can only enjoy that if you go there, right? And so because Abraham believed God, verse 4, Abraham went as the Lord had told him.

You see, it was because of Abraham's faith that he was able to receive God's blessing. Through his obedience to God's commands that he received the blessing.

And the same is true for us. Paul, when he writes to Galatians, says the same thing.

Understand then that those who have faith are children of Abraham. scripture for sure that God would justify the Gentiles, the nations, by faith and announce the gospel in advance to Abraham. All nations will be blessed through you. So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, man of faith. The point of these verses is that accessing God's blessing is not about our heritage, where we have come from, what we have done, but whether we have faith, whether we believe God will do what he has promised, whether we will live our life in obedience to him.

[20 : 06] This is amazing news because it means anyone here today, old or young, whatever past, wherever you are from, can access this hope of blessing.

Abraham was a nobody with no hope for the future and he did not deserve blessing. But God blessed him because of his faith in the promise and he became the father of many nations.

Now for us there's no physical land for us to go to, but there is a person we must come to, the one who gives out the blessing. If we are to experience the blessings of being God's children now, to have real peace and comfort, security, knowing his fatherly care, to have his resurrection power inside us, so that we can live free from sin and despair and have the hope of inheriting the new creation where there be no more brokenness.

We need to come to Jesus. Paul continues, if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

The point is it's not just some generic faith that God is good and will bless, but it's faith in Christ, Abraham's seed, turning to him, putting our hope in him, not in anything else, obeying him as our Lord, that we receive the promise of blessing.

[21 : 49] Jesus, the Christ, is the giver of blessing. It's not in Trump, not in Keir Starmer, not in Muhammad or Krishna, not in our own intellect, not in our own creativity or achievements or our own ideas about God.

God's blessing, to the world, comes through belonging to Christ, faith in Christ alone, believing that Jesus died on the cross to take our sin and that he's now alive and reigns, bringing his blessing to the nations.

So can I ask us this morning, are you receiving this promise by faith in Christ? Do you realise there's no other way of receiving God's blessing?

Jesus is Abraham's seed, God's promised means of blessing for this broken world. Will you come to him forsaking all others?

Christ? Now, I think it's easy, even as those who may have put their trust in Christ, to get distracted on the journey.

[23 : 07] You see, decision of faith is not a once-in-a-lifetime thing, but it's a constant thing.

Actually, Abraham had to set out. It was quite a long journey, and each day he would have asked this question, should I keep going?

and I think sometimes as Christians we can be tempted to think like that too here is a you can't see it very well actually but it's a hobbit hut when we went hiking around Scotland there's these kind of sheds and I think sometimes the promise that God gives us sometimes can seem quite far off can seem a bit distant and irrelevant and we might be tempted to look at the the kind of sheds the kind of huts around us and think well maybe I'll make I'll make my home there maybe I'll just settle for that so we we end up living a bit like our hope is found in our work and our family and perhaps our football team through having a nice house a nice reputation being in that relationship and we often feel like like we're lacking we feel like we're not really under God's blessing well do we realize blessing comes through obedience to Christ through faith in him it's when we seek his kingdom first we no longer worry about what people think about us and we can have true peace and contentment or when we truly trust our lives to his care that we can live confidently with no fear of the future and the thing I just want to encourage us this morning is we can have far more confidence today than Abraham did that God will bring about his blessing because the promise seed has come God has kept his promise he's shown that he can be trusted and he will finish what he started and just take a look at this room around us people from all nations here

God is fulfilling his promise we can have confidence that he will bring about this blessing so we can trust him we can have faith in him even when sometimes the sheds look a bit more attractive what might it look like for us to live by faith in God's promise of future blessing this week how might it shape our priorities how we use our time because dear brothers and sisters we have an amazing hope God will bless all nations through Abraham's seed who is Jesus Christ he's the one we should look to let's pray heavenly father we just thank you that you are a God who keeps his promises that you made a promise to Abraham and that that has been fulfilled through Jesus who is the Christ thank you that your blessing is being poured out to all nations and we just pray that you would help us help us to embrace that promise for ourselves to make it our own to be those who belong to Christ and to live by faith in him the rest of our lives in Jesus name

Amen thank you for opening up Genesis 12 thank you for ending up