

Jesus Teaches Us Suffering & Service

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[0 : 00] Our God and Father, we ask your presence with us as we turn to your word, that you by your Holy Spirit may take your word and use it to point out to the person of Jesus Christ.

And in Christ we pray that we might be the Father. We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. The story of Abraham.

And so I have to take this beginning and use it to draw a conclusion. And I'm happy to do that. Look at the text itself, if you will.

You will recall last week Dr. Pecker preached on Genesis chapter 11 and the building of the Tower of Babel.

And that chapter goes on to do some wonderful things in terms of giving you some history of people.

[1 : 28] God is primarily interested in people. And some of these are very obscure people that God used. If ever you were asked to read this passage in public service, I would try and avoid it if I was useful.

As the names are somewhat different. However, it comes on down and ends with Terah, who lived 70 years, became the father of Abraham, Nahor, and Haran.

Haran died, leaving a son whose name was Lot. And Terah took Abraham and his wife Sarai, Abram and Sarai, and Nahor and his wife.

And they went to a place called Haran, which is the same as his brother's name. And there they remained until Terah died.

And when Terah died, chapter 12 begins. And it begins with the call of Abram. And in a very matter-of-fact way, the scriptures record for us that the Lord said to Abraham, Go!

[2 : 46] And Abraham went. And that becomes really the prototype of every follower of God since that time.

That God says to you, Go! And you find it in your heart by faith to do what God says. To obey him. And so, Abraham was called to go.

It wasn't his obedience that fills the next paragraph, though. It's God's provision for him as he goes. Look at it carefully.

And you will see that he is to go from his country, his kindred, his father's house. That is, he is to cut those things off, leave them behind.

But he is to go to the land that the Lord will show him. That God will make of him a great nation. That God will bless him.

[3 : 55] That God will give him a great name. My esteemed friend, Mr. Jeff Greenman, pointed out that back in Genesis chapter 11, the people who built the Tower of Babel tried to make a great name for themselves.

In chapter 12, God gives to Abraham the promise of a great name. That he would be a blessing. That those who blessed him would be blessed.

Those who cursed him would be cursed. And through him, all the families of the earth would bless themselves. Or, in him, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

So, the Lord makes a wonderful provision for Abraham as he goes. And it is the intention, I'm sure, of God, when he tells you to go, that he will similarly provide in a wonderful way for you.

Well, verse 4 then of chapter 12 says that Abraham went, as the Lord had told him. He still had Lot with him, his nephew.

[5 : 12] He was 75 years old. Which presumably means that he knew what he was doing. And, though that doesn't always happen, I suppose.

Abraham took Sarah, his wife. Sarai, his wife. Remember, their names have not as yet been changed. That comes later on in the story. Where Abram becomes Abraham. And Sarai becomes Sarah. He took Lot. He took Lot. He took all the possessions. Which, with his father Terah, he had taken to Haran from Ur of the Chaldees. And then he goes with his possessions. His wife. His nephew. And the people that had been born to their company when they had gone to Haran. And they set forth to go on that ancient route which marked the center of the world. The route from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Israel or Canaan.

[6 : 21] When they came to the land of Canaan, Abraham passed through the land. Because it wasn't his yet. It was only his by promise. And he came to the place called Shechem. To the Oak of Morah. Which was thought perhaps to be a place of some religious significance. And it became from this moment on a place of great religious significance. Because there the Lord appeared to Abram and gave him a promise. Abram had obeyed. Had done what the Lord had told him to do. Now the Lord meets him at the end of that journey. And gives him the promise. Verse 7. To your descendants I will give this land. And that simple promise. Keeps our world on its ears from that day to this. Virtually without interrupt. But there it is.

[7 : 26] I will give you this land. And in response, Abram built there an altar to the Lord. Who had appeared to him. That is, he marked the spot carefully. You will see again in verse 8. That from there he removed to the mountain on the east of Bethel. Which became a famous place when Jacob spent the night dreaming there. Abram was there first. And there he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west. And Ai on the east. Down south of Jerusalem. So he's traveling in a north to south direction. When he got to that second place. He again built an altar to the Lord. And called on the name of the Lord. In the beautiful commentary on Genesis by Derek Kidner.

[8 : 33] He points out. And I think it's well worth your noticing. That he pitched the tent but built an altar. So that should show you where your value system should be. Most of us pitch an altar in some distress point in our lives. But what we're building is our own security. He pitched a tent which was a transitory place of dwelling. And he built an altar which was established in rock for all the ages. And Abraham journeyed on. Still going toward the Negev. He was a nomad now. He had flocks and herds with him. He subsequently divided the land. And this is the beginning of the story of Abraham's obedience to God.

[9 : 33] And the picture of Abraham's obedience to God. Is the basic story. At the root of the whole of the Jewish faith. The whole of the Muslim faith. And the whole of the Christian faith. This story of this man. And so he's a tremendously important person. There is in the history of this city. A very important bunch of daffodils. Now this bunch of daffodils. Was taken in I think the month of February. From Vancouver. By a businessman. Who was traveling out here. Back to his wife. In Saskatchewan. Now daffodils in Saskatchewan. In February. Are a wonder to behold.

[10 : 34] Particularly 60 or more years ago. When this took place. And that wife. In response to that bunch of daffodils. Said. We're moving to Vancouver. That was her call. And she obeyed it. And moved here. And now even in these very few. There is a family. Which is one of the. Great families in the history of Vancouver. Business and industry. Which. That are here. Simply because of that. Tiny and almost insignificant. Event. And you will notice. I hope. That. Abram's call. Is a tiny. And almost insignificant.

Event. But it has changed. The whole course of history. Because. This man. To whom God. Spoke. And called to go.

[11:31] Believed him in faith. And did what he was called to do. And I would like to give you. Every assurance. That the way God will work in your life.

Is not by building. A great power. Or a huge city. He will work in a way. So simple. So simply. As to utterly.

Confound you. His orders will be. So direct. And so simple. That you can't mistake them. Except because you are an extremely wise.

Intelligent. Sophisticated. And rational person. That you are altogether likely. To superciliously. Overlook them. But.

The command will be simple. And direct. And you will be asked. To obey. So. That's how it all began. And out of this story.

[12:29] You get. This story being used. When. After. The death. And resurrection. And ascension. Of Jesus Christ. The preachers.

And the acts of the apostles. Wanted to tell people. What had happened. And they said. Abraham. Believed. By faith. And then. When Paul.

Paul started to write. His great treatise. On. What it was. To receive. The grace. And mercy. Of God. He said. It is. As Abraham.

Believed God. In faith. And it was. Counted to him. As righteousness. And in Galatians. Paul again. Tells the story.

Of Abraham. To explain to you. How the Christian life. Works. And in the epistles. Of the Hebrews. Again. The same thing happens. He says.

[13:23] Look at Abraham. And you will understand. How Christian faith. Works. And I'm going to tell you. Three things. Which should mark your life. In so far.

As you are. A child of Abraham. A child of Abraham. Not by blood. Perhaps. But. Through faith. In Jesus Christ.

There are three things. That will mark your life. In so far. As you are. A believer. The first is. That you have received.

A call. From God. Which. You have attempted. Albeit. Perhaps. Not as well. As you would like to have attempted. But you will have.

Responded. In faith. To that call. That God. Through the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. That called you. To come. And follow.

[14:20] To take up your cross. And follow him. As. Archie preached about this morning. The call belongs to you. And it comes from God.

And it is uniquely to you. And you uniquely must hear it. And you uniquely. In your own heart. Must respond to it. And you must. You must recognize.

That this. Bunch of daffodils experience. So to speak. This. Tiny. Insignificant event. Will change the whole course.

Of your life. The second thing that you need. Is to recognize. That you are under. A covenant. Abraham went. From Haran.

To Shechem. To the oaks of Morah. And there. He built. An altar. Because that was where God. Made him. A promise. And in order to keep God.

[15:18] To his word. He built. An altar there. And in order to keep. Himself. Reminded. Of God's promise. He built. An altar there.

So that the covenant. Between him. And his God. Would be. Certainly. Established. And that what you and I need. Is. The recognition.

Of the covenant. Which exists. Between us. And God. And wherever we're going. And wherever we're. Whatever we're doing. Wherever we find ourselves. We rebuild.

As it were. The altar. To remind ourselves. Of the covenant. Which God has made with us. In Christ. The promise. That he's made to us.

The promise. By which we live. And the promise. On which we. Depend. That we have a call. From God. We have a covenant. With God.

[16:13] We have. We pitch our tent. But we build. That. Covenant. Relationship. With God. That's what we build. Our life around. And we have to come back to it.

Over. And over again. Maybe we'll do it. At the coffee.

Somebody told me. A couple of weeks ago. Somebody who was in this congregation tonight. As I proceed. That they would dare me to preach on. Why you should go to church on Sunday. Rather than go. Wind surfing. There's some good material. To look at that question. In this text tonight. And if it doesn't immediately occur to you. How it applies. We'll deal with it in the discussion. The third thing. That we have. Is the call of God. The covenant.

[17:12] Which goes with Abraham. Wherever he goes. That's what he builds. Into his life. The reality of that covenant. And the third thing. That he has.

Is a city. Remember how in. In. In Genesis chapter 11. They.

They say to themselves. In chapter 11. Verse 4. Come let us build ourselves a city. And a tower with its top. And the heavens. And let us make a name for ourselves.

Lest we be scattered abroad. Upon the face of the whole earth. And so this huge construction project. Went. Became. Was undertaken.

With. Slaves. And stone. And soil. And mud. And. And masons. And everybody coming together. Trying to establish something. Which would last for a thousand ages.

[18:10] And would be. Something that would make this people. That started out in that way. A people whose names would be praised. Through all the generations of history. They would do something.

Infinitely great. They would build a city. They built a city. In chapter 11.

In chapter 12. God. God. God. Called Abraham. Whereabouts of that city. Probably couldn't be found. If all the archaeologists.

In all the world. Were to try and dig. And find it somewhere. But what God began. In the call of Abraham. Is part of every continent.

And island. On the whole of this planet. And has been preached. And read about. And studied. And examined. And has moved men.

[19:07] Because it begins. With God. Notice. In Hebrews. Chapter 11. Verse 8. The difference. Between. The city of Genesis.

Chapter 11. And the city. Which Abraham was concerned about. When in chapter 11. Verse 8. Of Hebrews. As opposed to chapter 11.

Verse 4. Of Genesis. You read. By faith. Abraham. Obey. When he was called. To go out. To a place. Which he was to receive.

As an inheritance. And he went out. Not knowing. Where he was to go. By faith. He sojourned. In the land of promise. As in a foreign land.

Living in tents. With Isaac and Jacob. Heirs with him. Of the same promise. For he looked forward. To the city. Which had foundations.

[20:00] Whose builder. And maker. Is God. A very different. Kind of a city. And that's the city.

That we're called to. We spend most of our time. And most of our energy. In the most. Futuous attempt. To repeat.

What was. What was frustrated. By God. In Genesis. In Genesis. Chapter 11. And we haven't really. Got hold. Of what was established.

By God. In Hebrews. Chapter 11. A city. Which has foundations. Whose maker. And builder. Is God. So we have a call.

To follow God. We have a covenant. Of promise. To live by. As we follow him. And we have an ultimate. Objective. Which transcends. The whole of human history.

[20:56] Because. From the city of death. In which we must. Live out our lives. We look. For a city. Which has foundations. Whose maker.

And builder. Is God. And that's how we're. To live our lives. It's not. I might say. A kind of. Instant remedy. It takes.

A few thousand years. To come into its fullness. And the purposes of God. May. If God spares us. Go on being fulfilled. In human history. Until.

That city. Until we come. To that city. Until we by faith. Are brought to that city. It goes on a long time. So that the very quietness.

Of God. Call of Abraham. The very. Intimacy. Of God's covenant. With Abraham. And the joy. Of the prospect.

[21 : 55] Of the city. Which has foundations. Are the things. By which we live. As the children of Abraham. Those who by Christ. Are called.

And covenanted. And look for a city. And that's the way. The story of Abraham begins. And really. In the scriptures. It doesn't end.

But we end the series. In Genesis there. And pray that God may bless. And that the preaching. That's been done through us. This summer. To all of us.

Let's pray for now. Amen.

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