

Home

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Date: 20 September 2015

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[0 : 00] Now over the last few weeks, our newspapers, our TV screens, any news website you go to, it's probably been overwhelmed by stories of what's being called one of the greatest humanitarian crises in Europe since the Second World War, and that's this incredible influx of tens of thousands, soon to be hundreds of thousands of refugees, of migrants into Europe, and they're coming from a place where they're suffering political oppression, drought, overcrowding, civil war, and as Christians, you and I, the first movement of our heart towards people who are labeled refugees and migrants, the first movement of our hearts has to be compassion.

It really does. That's because you and I have a natural connection with them. The reason that you and I have a natural connection with these refugees whose stories you're seeing on the screen is that you and I are migrants too.

You and I are also migrants. We're also refugees. We who are Christians, we who belong to Jesus Christ and have faith in him, we belong to a long line of homeless wanderers.

We're just like our Lord Jesus Christ. We're just like our father Abraham, who is our spiritual ancestor. And Abraham's story is told in the book of Genesis. It's told in the first book of the Bible, beginning in chapter 12.

And so in Genesis chapter 12, verse 1, we see Abraham. His family has left his birthplace. He's left the city of Ur and has traveled to the city of Haran, up the river, where he's settled down.

[1 : 43] But after Abraham's father dies, the Lord speaks to him and he says to him these words from Genesis chapter 12, verse 1. Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

And I will make of you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. And him who dishonors you, I will curse.

And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So Abraham was given a command and he was given a promise from the Lord and he obeys the Lord.

He leaves his new home in Haran and travels to a country, a faraway land that he's never seen, the land of Canaan, to the land that's going to become known as the promised land.

And that leads us this morning, this story of Abraham leads us this morning to the passage, to the passage from scripture the Holy Spirit is going to use to impress his truth on our hearts, on my heart, on your heart today.

[2 : 47] And this passage is found in the New Testament. It's near the end of the Bible. If you don't have a Bible, just please raise your hands and I'm sure an usher would be happy to bring you a Bible if you need one.

Now, we're going to be in Hebrews chapter 11. This is near the end of the New Testament of the Bible. And we're going to start reading in verse 8. Our focus is going to be on verses 13 through 16. But for the sake of context, we're going to begin in verse 8. Let me read this morning. By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith, he went to live 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 was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. By faith, Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

[3 : 57] Therefore, from one man and him as good as dead were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

This is the word of the Lord. And what the Holy Spirit is going to do today for you, what he's going to do today for me, is he's going to use this passage of scripture to transform your perspective on who you are, your perspective on what you should long for, and your perspective on whether you can trust God or not.

[5 : 16] And what these verses do is they teach us this, that if you have faith in the Lord God, you will long for a home that only he can prepare for you. If you have faith in the Lord God, then you will long for a home that only he can prepare for you.

So let's take a look here at verses 13 through 16. And if we're going to start right from the beginning, we're going to see that these verses start on a down note.

First three words here in the English Standard Version are, these all died. Not the sort of thing you want to put in a Hallmark card, right? You're not going to find too many in the drugstore like that one.

These all died. And what's even worse, it doesn't get better from there because it says these all died, not having received the things promised. And Abraham's an obvious example of this because when Abraham died, he wasn't this great nation that the Lord had promised he would be.

Abraham left behind only a small handful of descendants. The only land he owned was a little cave in the corner of a field just so that he could bury his wife.

[6 : 29] Abraham didn't get to see God's promises come to pass. Now, I think this is where the author of Hebrews really wants us to put ourselves in Abraham's shoes, put ourselves in his world, put ourselves in his mind.

Because the Bible isn't just the story of God's work back in history 4,000 years ago, irrelevant to today. This isn't a book club. This is the story of God's work in our own lives.

It's relevant to here and now. And I think it's safe to say for many, really probably most if not all of us today, there's been a thread of disappointment running through your life too, hasn't there?

Things just haven't always worked out the way that you wanted them to, right? I mean, maybe right from the start you were raised in a difficult home environment where as a result you're left scarred, you're left hurting.

Maybe when you were younger you had dreams of a career that really just hasn't materialized.

Maybe you had dreams of a family that God never gave you. Maybe your children, maybe you did have a family.

[7 : 38] Your children grew up and they turned their backs on you. They turned their backs on the Lord, perhaps. Or maybe you have all of that, but it's so hard to enjoy because your health has gone so bad.

Out of all the pharmacies in Squamish, your medicine cabinet is the most well-stocked. Out of all the pharmacies in Squamish, your medicine cabinet is the most well-stocked. Maybe you're struggling with hopelessness, with depression, with despair.

Maybe you've attempted to live out your faith and tried to be a witness for Christ and it's put an incredible strain on your family. It's put an incredible strain in your workplace.

Maybe you're struggling with sin and temptation that you just can't seem to shake. And I could just go on and on and on. We have to come face to face.

We have to face reality that life routinely falls short of what we long for it to be, doesn't it? Now, if you don't feel that way now, just hang on for a few years.

[8 : 38] You're going to feel that way at some point. You can't avoid disappointment in this life. You simply can't avoid it. But you can have faith in the face of disappointment. You can have faith in the face of disappointment.

The author of Hebrews writes, these all died. And then he adds two words. And these two words change the whole tone of the passage. And these two words are the key to this entire chapter of the Bible.

In faith. These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar.

Now, this is the first aspect of a faith that can face disappointment head on, that can look it in the eye and still smile. This is the first aspect of that faith.

Because in their mind's eye, the patriarchs, men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they saw God's promises coming to pass off in the distance, and they welcomed them.

[9 : 39] They knew their lives had not really gone the way that they wished. But instead of becoming bitter against God, instead of harboring anger against him, instead of giving in to despair, what they did is they let their unfulfilled desires become a fuel.

They let their unfulfilled desires become a fuel for their longing for God's promised blessings. Their disappointment, they didn't try to suppress those desires. They harnessed them.

They harnessed them so that they could long for God's promised blessings more and more. And you too can believe, though you haven't received. You too can believe, though you haven't received.

You can trust God to keep his promises. Like Sarah, who considered him faithful who had promised. You can believe this about God, that he is a solid rock.

He is a solid rock in whom you can ground your faith. If you have faith in God, you will long for a home that only he can prepare for you.

[10 : 48] So you can believe, though you haven't received. And there's a second aspect to the kind of faith that can stand strong even when it's shaken by disappointment. And you can see that again in verse 13.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar. And here's where the second aspect of faith comes in. And having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

So not only do you believe something about God, you also believe something about you. You believe something about yourself. And that's something is that you are a resident alien in this world. You don't belong here. You really don't belong here. For most of his time in the land of Canaan, that's how Abraham felt. Abraham didn't have a single clump of dirt to call his own for most of his time.

He was a stranger among a people who, you know, best respected him. And at worst were a threat to him. They didn't accept him as their own flesh and blood.

[11 : 55] And if you really are a Christian, then you are like Abraham in this respect. You are alien to the world in general. You're alien to Canadian culture in particular. And the faith that perseveres through disappointment is a faith that acknowledges your alienation.

You can acknowledge your alienation. The alienation that a true Christian experiences, it comes when we identify ourselves with the people of God.

When we identify ourselves with that culture of holiness, that culture of love, that's created by the gospel. Our identity comes from God our King in this culture. We strive to imitate him.

He is our Father. We do this because we've been united with his Son, Jesus Christ. His Son took our sins on himself. His Son credited us with his righteousness so that we would be acceptable before God.

But we serve one another as brothers and sisters, strengthened, equipped by the Holy Spirit. That's what life in God's kingdom is like. That's what life in this gospel culture is like.

[12 : 59] And it's alien to the world. It doesn't belong in this world. And when you're part of this gospel culture, as a result, the best that this world has to offer will not ever be enough.

It will not ever be enough for you. And whenever in the past, maybe before you knew Jesus Christ, maybe you used to be able to use coping mechanisms to deal with unfulfilled longings.

You could go, you know, thinking of here in Squamish, we have coping mechanisms like a day of snowboarding at Whistler or scaling the chief and afternoon fishing in the river.

Maybe you could enter a marathon in your chosen sport, whether it's running, whether it's cycling, whether it's Netflix. You know, as good as those things are, those are very good things.

They're not enough. They're not enough for you anymore. You're not satisfied with them anymore. You used to give in to the desires of the flesh, whether it was gossiping about others, committing sexual sin, obsessing over money, many other things that we thought in the past would satisfy, would feed us deep inside.

[14 : 12] But the gospel tells you, now you who believe in Christ, you who are part of a future kingdom, you are now a resident alien. You will not find your home in any of those things.

You will be a restless wanderer on the earth until the day you die. And if you have faith in God, you will long for a home that only he can prepare for you.

Now, do you know this? Do you feel this deep down to the very core of your being, down to the very heart of who you are?

Because deep inside, every single believer in Jesus Christ is a melancholy cry, a restless cry that says, I want to go home.

I want to go home. Because home is a place where you belong. Home is a place where you're accepted, you're safe, you can let your guard down, you don't have to protect yourself anymore.

[15 : 15] You can be with your father. You can be with your family. It's what you've been looking for your whole life. And because of your faith in God, you will search for your home.

You'll search for your home. That's what our ancestors in the faith were doing. They believed God's promises. And they saw themselves as foreigners and aliens on the earth.

And in verse 14, we read this. People who speak thus, people who speak like this, who talk like this, make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

They make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. And so their mindset, their whole way of thinking and talking, it proved that they had faith in God. It proved that they believed that he would give them a home.

And deep down, everyone on earth to some degree believes that even if you're not a Christian, everyone's longing for home because we're all children of our father Adam.

[16 : 15] We're all children of the first man. We all want to go back home to Eden. We all want to go back home to where it all began when we were in fellowship with the Lord. The key question is, where are you going to search for your home?

And that's a question for believers. That's a question for anyone here who doesn't believe in Jesus Christ. Where are you going to search for your home? Do you know where you truly belong?

Do you know who you should identify yourself with and what you should identify yourself with?

Because there are a lot of possible places that you can look for your home, right? I mean, think about Abraham.

He was born in the city of Ur. They moved to the city of Haran. Either one of those he could have called his home. Either one of those he could have just settled down in, made a home for himself there, said, this is where I belong.

But that's not the way he thought of those cities. That's not the way he thought of them. We read in verse 15. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

[17 : 26] They would have had the opportunity to return. They could have found an excuse to go back. But Abraham wasn't satisfied with the country that he came from. Abraham knew that that country was not his home.

So what about you? I'll tell you this. As for your home? It's not where you came from either. Your home is not where you came from either. God has intervened in your life.

If you're a believer, he's intervened in your life to change your whole identity, to point you towards a new homeland. Home is not where you came from.

It's where you're going. Home is not where you came from. It's where you're going. And Abraham and her other forefathers in the faith, they knew this was true.

Verse 16, we read this. But as it is, they desire a better country. That is, a heavenly one. And the better country that was promised to them, it's been promised to you and to me as well.

[18 : 31] If we truly are children of God. If we truly are spiritual descendants of Abraham. I think we need to take a little bit of time now to think about this.

Because there's a phrase in here that we're going to need to park on. I've preached on this passage before in other churches. But in each place that you preach, every town kind of has its own unique characteristics.

Every town has its own personality. Every town has its own, you know, things that are really great about it. And things that are kind of, there's a darkness or a spiritual blindness about it. And I think this might be an area of spiritual blindness for us.

And it's this phrase that we might have a lot of trouble buying into. The better country. You know, it's easy to believe that you, that there's a better country for you.

When you've lost your family farm to drought. When your city's being torn apart by civil war. It's easy to believe that. It's a lot harder to believe in a better country when you're living in supernatural British Columbia.

[19 : 39] When you're surrounded by mountains and seas and sky. When you've got a good roof over your head, especially in rain like today. When you've got a full stomach. When you've got a happy family and a good job.

It feels a lot like God's country. And in a way it is. I often, if I want to ever tease my American friends. I talk about what life in God's country is like. You know.

It's good. God has given this to us. We should absolutely enjoy it. We should absolutely praise him. It's our duty to enjoy it. And that's a good thing. But here's a mistake that we make.

Because this feels so much like the better country. We settle down. We make a home for ourselves here.

We develop a lifestyle of leisure. We throw ourselves into the pursuit of pleasure. And what we end up doing is we construct for ourselves a counterfeit paradise.

[20 : 39] A counterfeit Eden. And you know what? It's a pretty good counterfeit, isn't it? It's good enough to fool us. Our good country is good enough to fool us into thinking it's the better country.

And what happens is God has given us this good country not so that we would be satisfied with it. Not so that we would be content here. He's given to us because he wants to kindle in us and stoke into white hot flame a longing for a better country.

This is just a shadow of what the world will be when Christ returns. There is a better country. What we do is we take this good thing that God has given us.

This thing that should grow our longings. And we fashion it into a counterfeit to suppress our longings. But just like our father Abraham, you and I, we have to be looking for a better country. We cannot be satisfied with a counterfeit. One reason you can't be satisfied with counterfeits is that, first of all, they don't hold up well over time. Counterfeits do not hold up well.

[21 : 49] They're not as sturdy. They're not as well built as the real thing. In chapter 12, verse 28, the author of Hebrews refers to the better country as a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

It's a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Now, I'll tell you what. This good country that we have here, one of the first things I found out about it is that, oh, it can be shaken.

Very literally. I mean, we've all read the news stories about the big one that's supposed to be coming, right? You know, the big one's supposed to hit. And I don't know what, Mount Garibaldi's supposed to erupt. We're going to have like a lake come pouring down on us.

This kind of apocalyptic thing going on here. And that might happen in our lifetime. Probably won't. We don't know. Could happen at any time. But even if it doesn't, the counterfeit can still be taken away from you in an instant, can't it?

A few words from a doctor in a waiting room. A moment's lapsed attention as you're driving down the highway. A chronic pain that grows and grows over time and no amount of medicine can take away.

[22 : 57] A bad relationship that sucks every last drop of joy out of your formerly adventurous life. And even if you survive all that, even if you never have a loved one who passes away, your own death is surely inevitable, is it not?

At some point, everything that you love and value, if you love the counterfeit country, at some point it will be taken from you. Counterfeits don't hold up.

But the better country does. The better country can't be shaken. It can never be taken away from you because it's God's kingdom. Because it is built by the Lord God.

It is a place where the Lord reigns as king forever and ever. And you are a citizen of this kingdom. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you belong to this kingdom. And it is coming to this world to replace the counterfeit with the real.

It is inevitable. It is unstoppable. And this is a very, very, very good thing, is it not? Because another reason we're looking for the better country is this. The very obvious reason that it's better.

[24 : 08] It's so much better. You just look at the way that people who see and understand the better country, look at the way they live for it. Verse 24. By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt. For he was looking to the reward. So Moses was living in the original superpower in Egypt. He was living the life of luxury, the life of royalty. He had people waiting on him hand and foot. He had a wonderful, amazing life that, you know, people in the ancient world could only have dreamed of.

And he gave it all up. He gave it all up for a band of smelly sheep herders. And a promised land. He had a better country to look forward to.

Better than all the treasures of Egypt. In Jesus Christ, our Lord, he knew also what was waiting for him. He too longed for the better country. Chapter 12, verse 1.

[25 : 19] We read about Christ. We read here, You have here Jesus Christ.

And I could spend hours talking about what the better country is like. There's so much imagery, so much description in the Bible about what the better country is like. What the new heavens and the new earth is like.

But you can see here what Jesus was willing to do for it. You can see from his actions, which I think speak so much louder than words. Jesus was willing to endure a lifetime of alienation. A lifetime of suffering.

He was willing to endure the pain of beatings, crucifixion, being separated from God, the wrath of God himself. And he did it because he knew the joy of the better country.

He knew the joy of the better country. Jesus loved that country. And he wants you and me to be a part of it. He loves us so much. Jesus loves us so much, he might even be willing to give up a week and a whistler for us.

[26 : 42] You know, he is truly someone who can sacrifice himself. And he did it because he had faith. Because he had the life of faith in the Lord God. If you have faith in the Lord God, you will long for a home that only he can prepare for you.

And if you are working for your God, if you are working for your king, if you are longing for his kingdom to come, there is a beautiful promise in verse 16.

I want you and me, we need to hold on tight to this. Our fathers in the faith longed for that future kingdom, that better country. So in verse 16 we read this.

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God. For he has prepared for them a city. If you search for your home with God, then God will not be ashamed of you.

That's sort of the roundabout way of saying God will be proud of you. God will be glad to call you his own. Now isn't that beautiful? This is what makes it the better country.

[27 : 51] This is what makes it that better country. It's because you will be home with your God. Who is proud to call you his own. Who is glad to call you his own.

There's a sense that maybe sometimes we kind of feel like God sort of puts up with me. That God just tolerates my presence. No, God actually likes you. God actually wants you to be with him. You know, you realize that even now, this gathering here, the Lord God has been looking forward to this. He loves this. This is beautiful to him.

This brings joy to his heart. This is what he loves and longs for. And he loves and he's looking forward to the great gathering in the new heavens and the new earth. Where this is just a shadow. This is just a sneak preview of that. He is excited about it. And he's preparing his new heavens, the new earth for us. Now maybe, I don't know, maybe you're the kind of person where you want more evidence.

[28 : 57] You want more proof than that. Because those are just words. You know, words that say God's not ashamed of you. God is proud of you. Those are just words, right? You want actions to back that up.

Because maybe you've seen people drop their commitments in the past. Maybe you've seen people who told you that they won't leave you. They won't let you go.

And then they did it anyway. When it became convenient for them. Maybe you have a hard time trusting God's promise of a better country. Well, here's proof that you can trust God to keep his promise.

Your proof is in verse 16. God is not ashamed to be called their God for he's prepared for them a city. God is not ashamed to be called their God. And we know this because he has prepared for them a city.

In other words, if you want proof that God won't change his mind, you can see it here. If you want proof that he will not be ashamed to welcome you into his better country.

[30 : 01] That he won't be ashamed to welcome you home. There's no better proof than this. Your home is already waiting for you right now. He has prepared for them a city.

You're already, and what's neat is that God's kingdom is so ready to break into this world. This future is so ready to become the present.

The new heavens and the new earth are so ready to come in. That it's almost like pieces of it just break through. Rays of light burst through into this present world. We see it here, right in front of us. I can see it here. You're part of a community of worshipers. They're seated all around you. You have a savior. You have a mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. Whom God has already given to you as a sacrifice.

You have the Holy Spirit of God who is with you and among you. You are sitting in a room. You are surrounded by angels. You are worshiping alongside a great cloud of witnesses. The saints who've died long ago in the faith.

[31 : 06] The better country is already breaking into this world in little ways like that. It's so great. This kingdom's here already. You know what's so amazing? The kingdom has barely arrived.

It hasn't even fully arrived. Because look at Hebrews chapter 13 verse 14. Where the author writes, Here we have no lasting city. But we seek the city.

What he calls the city that is to come. The city that is to come. It's still coming. What we have here is good. What we have here before us is good.

And the world we have around us is good. But the best is yet to come. The foundations of the new Jerusalem have already been laid. And the Lord is not going to cancel his building project.

So first of all, If you're going through difficult experiences. If you're going through a really tough time right now. If you're feeling beat up. If you're just hanging in there. Please take heart.

[32 : 07] Because this world, It's not supposed to be an easy place to live in. It isn't. You're not supposed to be comfortable here. This is not your home. We live in a culture which thinks that this world is pretty much all you've got to live for.

Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. If you're not happy, Then something's wrong with you. That's not true. If you're not happy, That may be prayerfully fine.

Read the Psalms. They're full of unhappy people. Pouring out their hearts to God. Look at the life of Jesus Christ. There are times when Christ was mourning. When he was sad.

What's great though about this promise. Is that next to that deep well of sorrow That's drilled into your heart. There's an even deeper well of joy. And you can have that unquenchable well of joy. Because you know that the best is yet to come. Because you know that you will get home someday. You know that you will find rest for your soul. Second, if you're a Christian Who has been living the dream And the words that I'm talking about this long And they don't really make a lot of sense to you.

[33 : 25] If you have a good life. If you're enjoying everything here And you're quite comfortable without a care in the world. If you feel settled. If you feel at home. Something has gone terribly wrong. Something has gone terribly, terribly wrong.

You can't get too comfortable here. It's like getting comfortable on the deck of the Titanic. All the things you're hanging on to Could be stripped away in an instant And they will be stripped away from you at some point.

Nothing in this present world is permanent. So you give yourself to the better country. You long for the better country. You don't hold back anything Toward this present age.

Third, if you're here this morning And you haven't surrendered to Jesus Christ As the one and only Lord The King of this coming kingdom If you haven't trusted Him as your Savior Please, you need to do it.

You need to do it now. Because if you find your home in a world that's passing away Then you too will pass away along with it. You will lose everything in this world you're clinging to.

[34 : 35] And you will never find eternal life in the better country With Jesus Christ. Please, all of us, we must turn to the Lord. You will find rest in Him. You will find home for your homesick soul.

So that you will know for your home. Thank you.