

The Faithful Servant

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[0 : 00] I'm sure that we're all rather familiar with this passage, and we're familiar with the narrative that unfolds before us in chapter 24, where we have at the end of the chapter, they're coming together in marriage of Rebecca and Isaac.

That's a very familiar passage, and one which we know so well. What we have really at the beginning of the passage in chapter 24 in verse 1 is Abraham in old age, and his concern is for his son.

His concern is for Isaac, that Isaac is not married. And he here commends his servant and sends him on this errand to go to his own homeland and find a wife for Isaac.

And what we see here, of course, as we see Abraham coming towards the end of his life is the realization that he is drawing closer and closer to the fulfillment of the promise that God has given to him.

Abraham sees himself as a stranger in this world. He sees himself as a citizen of somewhere else, a citizen of the heavenly city.

[1 : 24] The letter to Hebrews reminds us such that he looks for the city that is to come, that he's left behind his own father's land to walk on this journey and to continue deciding the things that are to come.

And what we have by chapter 24 is really the close of the narrative of the life of Abraham. And you'll notice this as you continue reading through this. In chapter 25, we have the death of Abraham.

And then till the end of the book of Genesis, we have the narrative that is chiefly concerned with Jacob and his family. And famously, it includes the situation of Joseph.

And I know that we've got a limited time here this evening in our time of worship before we proceed further with the responsibilities that have been placed upon us today in signing the call.

But I want us just to reflect on a few items here. A few items in relation to what we have in chapter 24. And just to make a few remarks that apply to our own situation.

[2 : 35] And what comes into focus here in chapter 24 is Isaac. And Genesis says a very limited amount about Isaac.

And it's interesting for us here to come and to realize how his own situation unfolded and the direction of his father. In chapter 25, we learn that Isaac was 40 years old by the time he married Rebecca.

And we come here in terms of to look at this and to concern ourselves with the elements that apply to us this evening. And just to look briefly at a couple of things.

And in terms of the narrative, there are many things for us to notice and many things that we know so well. We know that this is a love story. It is a tender account of the experience of the marriage of Rebecca and Isaac.

And it comes to us in the context of the death of Sarah, the mother of Isaac. And this, of course, must have been a very difficult time for Isaac.

[3 : 46] How after we've lost somebody precious to us, how we feel so hurt and grieved. And how we feel the void in our own life and in our own experience.

And for Abraham, Abraham goes on after this to marry some, marry again. He remarries. This is recorded for us in chapter 25.

In verse 1, he took another wife. And so Abraham himself feels the loss and the desire for further comfort. And what Isaac feels is something else.

Because Isaac has lost somebody who is irreplaceable. He's lost his mother. And no one can take the place of your mother. There is no one like your mother.

And when we come to the end of chapter 24, what we're told here is that Isaac and Rebecca are married. And at the very end of the chapter, Isaac was then comforted after his mother's death.

[4 : 48] And Rebecca brings to him that sense of comfort. Rebecca comes into the family to take this significant part in the family of Abraham after the death of Sarah.

And she comes really, we understand this, an arranged marriage. But verse 58 reminds us that she has consented to this. Isaac's own experience in verse 63 is a man who meditates, who involves himself in spiritual disciplines.

And he seeks the Lord's help in the midst of his grief and in his pain. And in the midst of everything, God is at work. And he is preparing this situation.

And he is preparing Rebecca to come into this home. And Isaac finds comfort. We're reminded not just that this is a love story, but that this is given in covenant framework.

Because it concerns Abraham in verse 1. He initiates all of these things. Because here is a man who is waiting on the Lord.

[5 : 58] And he realizes that the blessings of God for him are invested in Isaac. God has promised him a great seed, a great family.

God says to him, your seed are going to be innumerable. It's going to be like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. And the blessings of the whole world are going to come from your seed.

And this is a time of great trial and turmoil for Abraham. At one point he asks, is Eliezer, his servant, going to be the one who inherits his substance?

At another point he asks God for the life of Ishmael. And another point in chapter 22, we see there him giving Isaac on the altar, sacrificing, willing to sacrifice Isaac there.

And in the midst of everything he goes through, he still believes. And here at the end of his life, and Isaac here unmarried, he still believes.

[7 : 02] He's committed himself to the covenant that God has given him. He believes and trusts. And what we see in the response of Abraham is active faith.

Responding to the promises of God. Acting upon what God has said. And we see also, of course, and this is so familiar to us. In this very chapter, in this great experience that happens here, is an illustration of the gospel.

And how many times we've come to the question to Rebecca, will you go with this man? To see there that there is a sense of the urgency of the appeal and the invitation.

The necessity of leaving everything behind. Leaving the old life behind. And following the man. And there we see an illustration of what the gospel is.

In its urgency. In its demand for commitment. In its demand not to delay any longer. To put away the old life.

[8 : 06] And to seek to follow this Lord. And God is placing this great demand and this great invitation. He's giving us the church to herald this message.

And we herald this message. This is our business. This is what we do. And for those of you today who know what it is. To have this experience where the urgency of the gospel message comes to you.

And the demand upon you is to go with this man. You know what it means not to delay. You know what it means to respond. And to give your commitment. And to say like Rebecca of old.

I will go. I will go with this man. I will leave everything behind. And I will follow him. And you have made your commitment. And you follow Jesus. And yet some of you are here today.

And you make some sense of commitment. You are willing to come out here on a Tuesday evening. You are willing to commit yourself in some respect to the life of this congregation.

[9 : 12] To commit to concur with the call. To evidence your commitment there. But is it not time that you saw. That you need to realize the urgency of the gospel.

Will you go with this man? Will you respond to everything that the gospel is demanding from you? To realize the great urgency of this message.

And the demand to leave everything behind. And to delay no longer. But to give your commitment to the Lord. And to follow him. To go further than you are presently going.

And there is a picture here of course. Of faithfulness. The faithfulness of Abraham. He says to his servant. Don't let my son marry these Canaanites.

The realization that they are to marry within the family. This great principle we have consistently in scripture. In the Old and New Testament. To marry within the community of faith.

[10 : 17] His commitment to his own family. That he's lived as a pilgrim and a stranger in this world. And given the example that he seeks a kingdom to come. That he longs for his whole family to follow.

To know the Lord. And we see the faithfulness of God. That throughout this whole narrative in chapter 24. What we see is God has gone before them.

God is meeting them. God is making provision. God is there in everything they're doing. He has gone before them. He is sovereign. He is in control.

He is in every providence. He is there. Gone before us. But I want us just to reflect for a few moments.

On the faithfulness. Of the servant. Who becomes in chapter 4. Possibly the most important figure. When you reflect on.

[11 : 21] How these verses are following. His journey. And I want us just to think of. Two things. And first of all. I want us to think of. This man. We see in verses 2 and 3.

That Abraham. Himself. Has set himself. To choose a particular servant. And to send this servant. On this errand. And he consecrates.

The servant. He says to him in verse 2. Put your hand under my thigh. And this is a very intimate situation. That's going on here. This demand.

For faithfulness. And commitment. From the servant. And the solemn oath. Of the master. And he trusts this servant. We're told of this.

In verse 2. That he had charge of everything. He had. And the more we read of him. And the more we read into this chapter. The more we see the character of this man.

[12 : 19] We see in verse 10. His response. After everything he's done in verse 9. He puts his hand on the thigh of Abraham. He swore to him. And then in verse 10. Then he took the 10 camels.

And then he went out. He went and he did this. He responds immediately with obedience. To the master's command. He goes on this errand. Having given himself under oath to the task.

And we see him as a man of faith. In the household of Abraham. We find this man. Who is the servant of all his house. In verses 12 and 21 and 26 and 48.

We find him worshipping. We find him as a prayerful man. Before he engages in the activity. He prays. It's actually the first time.

In scripture. That we have a prayer seeking guidance from God. But not just that. But after the event. He prays too. Seeking God's guidance.

[13 : 25] And returning with thanksgiving. And gratitude. When he succeeds on his mission. One of the commentators. Speaks here. Of how.

Success. Inflates. The worldly person. But it humbles. The spiritual person. And the response is.

The response of humble. Worship. Here is a man who knows how to pray. How does he know. How to pray. How do you know how to pray. You've got the word of God.

You've got many aids. And helps. And devotions. Many things you use to pray. This man didn't have these things. He didn't have the scripture. What he learned.

He perceived from Abraham. The one. Of the master of the house. Who gives the example. And he learns. And he responds. And this man's faith.

[14 : 25] Is demonstrated. And he has learned. From the powerful testimony. Of Abraham. This man of faith. And he has a mature faith.

He would have probably been. A mature man anyway. In verse 2. We're told. He was the oldest. Of the household. But in the way. That he conducts himself.

There is no immaturity. In his behavior. Through all of the trials. And the tests. And the obstacles. He goes through. He remains committed. And faithful.

And prayerful. And we have to ask ourselves. Are we approaching the tasks. That God is bringing before us.

Prayerfully. Do we really know. How to pray. We're asking who this man is. But as a congregation.

[15 : 24] You're asking the same question. Who is it Lord. Who is it. And you're coming to God. Prayerfully.

Because what you're engaging in. Is a spiritual process. It's not some sense. In which we're. Following. The carnal practice.

Of the world. To recruit somebody. Into our business. The church is a different. Kind of entity. It's a spiritual entity.

And what we're doing here. Is at the very heart. Of our identity. And our origin. As a church. The demand. Of spiritual. Independency.

The demand. That no one. Can impose. A minister. Against the wishes. Of a congregation. That they are involved. And engaged. And invested. In this process.

[16 : 19] That it's their process. That it is a spiritual process. And they look for spiritual guides. They pray. To the Lord. God. And like this man.

It's an issue. Of humility. And gratitude. And prayer. Seeking God. Because the church.

Is a different. Kind of place. Paul says. Have the mind. Of Christ. Have that mind. Of humility. Follow the example.

Of Jesus. He says. It's yours. It belongs. To you. You're called. To humbly. Seek the Lord. To commit yourself. To him.

When we return. To the servant. What's quite amazing. And quite. Interesting. About him. Is that. He's not named. And yet.

[17 : 18] The whole narrative. Is taken up. With his journey. And his task. Some people. Have speculated. That it is. Eliezer. In chapter 15. Verse 2. Is this the same man?

And we're saying. We don't know. And what it's reminding us of. In this shroud. Of secrecy. In terms of the identity. Of this man. Is again. It's reminders.

Of the nature. Of the church. It is different. To the world. It is contrary. To the carnal. And the worldly minded. It is a spiritual issue.

And what's of. Atmost importance. Is the Lord. Humanity. Has always. Engaged. In this celebrity culture.

We think it's something new. It's not. We've always been. Exalting man. Making too much of man. Making idols. In our heart. Letting pride. And arrogance.

[18 : 12] Come in. But the church. Is different. Our attention. Isn't on people. Our attention. Is on our savior. Our risen. And ascended. Lord.

Whom we worship. And praise. Our attention. Is on him. This servant. Is a man. Who is not concerned.

With his own reputation. He's concerned. With a task at hand. And in everything. He is humbled. In verse 26. And 27. He's bowing his head.

He's worshipping. He's saying. Blessed be the Lord. The God of my master. Who has not forsaken. His steadfast love. And his faithfulness. This is a man. Who is amazed. By grace.

Amazed. By grace. Time and again. He is humbled. You remember. In verse 27. How the. The King James. Uses. Of course.

[19 : 07] His quaint. Phrase. I've been in the way. And yet. That's a very good. Translation. Of the Hebrew. I've been in the way.

The Lord blessed me. That's how he sees himself. The eye is emphatic. Me. Me. God has blessed me.

Me. And we see the character. Of this man. And we ask ourselves. The same question. Who is the man?

The man is the one. Whom the Lord chooses. To send. And I want to ask. Just secondly. As well. Of the task. What do we want.

The man to do? What do we want. The man to do? When we come. And we reflect on this. And we think. Of Abraham. And Abraham's there.

[20 : 03] Advanced in years. And longing to see Isaac married. We know that it's quite obvious. He wants the man to go. And to bring back a wife. For Isaac. It's quite clear.

But specifically. What this man is tasked to do. Is to bring a message. And to bring an invitation. And to come to the great high point.

In verse 58. And to ask. Will you go with this man? That's his task. And this man is devoted to this task. You see time and again.

There are obstacles. That he has to go through. In verse 33. He says. I'm not going to eat. Until this happens. Until I say what I have to say. In verse 56. They've got this delay tactic.

Let's leave this just now. Let's wait another 10 days. And the man says. No you can't hinder me. This task is all consuming. It's important.

- [21 : 00] I remember myself. Putting my hand under the master's thigh. I remember that solemn commitment. That I made. The oath that was there. And he looks back in his career.
- With Abraham. And he says. This is the single most important task. I've ever had to do. This is the greatest thing. I've ever had to do. For my master. And you cannot stop me.
- Nothing. Will stop me. He remains absolutely. Committed to the task. And he is brought before us here. As a picture. Of a faithful servant.
- Faithful to the task. Who remains somebody. Who will not. Be distracted. And we ask who the man is. And we ask.
- What do we want the man to do? We want the man to do the same thing. To have the same focus. To have the same. Devotion to his commission. And his call.
- [22 : 02] And his task. Paul says that. In 2nd Timothy chapter 2. He speaks of our absolute. Devotion to the task. And yet.
- We confess. That we're guilty. Of expecting. Too much. From people. And I wonder. If this has come into the church. Where we feel.
- That we're loading the ministry. With all the spiritual. Responsibilities. Let him do that. And we ask ourselves. What do we want.
- From a minister. And we say. We want an organizer. We want an administrator. We want a visitor. We want a counselor.
- We want somebody. Who's hospitable. We want somebody. Who would. To encourage us. And then. We come back. To the scripture. And we say. What's the specification. Of scripture. And the Bible.
- [23 : 01] Tells us. He has one distinctive. He preaches. He has a message. To tell. He has an invitation. To herald.
- He has one task. That he has been called. To give his primary. Devotion to. That consumes his life. That he commits himself. Fully to this.
- And all the other duties. Are they not the duties. Of us all. There are formal duties. That are required. Of the eldership. As a fellow elder.
- He is also responsible. Just like the other elders. He is responsible. To be hospitable. To be encouraging. To engage.
- To do all of these things. Along with the deacons. Also. Administering. But these are the formal tasks. But the reality is.
- [23 : 57] We are all doing these tasks. We are all called. To fulfill these tasks. The minister. As a primary function. Feed the flock of God. Feed this people.
- Give them the word of God. But surely the church. Undertakes to do. All its tasks. Together. We are discipling together. We are discipling.
- One another. We are engaged. With each other. We are investing. In one another's lives. You are here today. As the congregation. Here in this church.
- Church. And you have been through. Many different things. And in your recent history. People have left you. People have gone. People have gone.
- To set up other churches. And you are still here. You are still here. You are faithfully here. Committed to. What is going on here. Committed to what this church.
- [24 : 54] Means to you. That is why you are here tonight. You could have been in so many. Different places. You could have been at home. But you are committed. To this church. What this church. Means to you. And what does this church.
- Mean to you. It is your family. It is your brothers. And sisters. In the Lord. It is your spiritual home. It is your oasis.

In the desert. It is where you are committed to. And invested to. To display. In your own locality. Your witness and faith. And committing to disciple.

One another. Committing to be discipled. Making yourself vulnerable. To each other. Investing in one another. Committing.

In the journey of faith. As you long for the city. That is to come. You share in that faith. And you take responsibility.

[25 : 49] To be the people of God. To visit one another. To give hospitality. To one another. To encourage one another.

To rebuke one another. That is our task. Isn't it? If we really love each other. If we really see. That this is where we have our identity.

As the family. If we really read the words of Jesus Christ. Who calls us. To a demanding discipleship. He says. That we are being called. To carry a cross.

To deny ourselves. To come out of our comfort zone. To invest in the family. To share in the spiritual responsibilities. As the people of God.

And we come back. To the man. And the task. And we say what we want the man to do. We want him to be committed.

[26 : 49] To proclaiming this message. The full gospel. To proclaim it all. To bring the invitation. In its urgency. To be investing in God's people.

Here as part of the congregation. And to be devoted. To the master's call. And task. Solemnly given. To be faithful. And to which he will be solemnly.

Accountable for. We're all called to serve. We're all called to be faithful. And we believe that God is calling us this night.

To demonstrate our faith. As we seek the Lord's servant. For this congregation. To humbly commit ourselves. To desire a man.

Who will feed. The flock. Let's pray together. Gracious and most holy God. We give thanks to you for your word.

[27 : 50] And as reminder of the nature of the church. And of its life. And its vibrancy. And its value to us. In our own journey. We pray that you would help us.

And bless us. Even in the activities that are before us. And forgive us our sins. We pray. In Jesus name. Amen. We're going to sing again.

On this time.