

“ABRAHAM: THE PROMISE OF BLESSING.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Genesis 12:1-3; 22:17-18

Introduction.

Think for a moment about events that changed the course of human history, inventions, discoveries, assassinations, wars, natural disasters, and plagues.

Today is Peral Harbor day, 84 years ago on a Sunday morning our world was changed.

The printing press (1454)

Protestant Reformation (1517)

American Revolution (1765-1783): The Declaration of Independence.

Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1914) triggered the start of World War I.

Stock market crash of 1929: the beginning of the Great Depression.

Nuclear bomb on Hiroshima (1945)

Moon landing (1969)

Fall of the Berlin Wall (1989): The end of the Cold War and the reunification of Europe.

Birth of the Internet and the digital revolution (1990s)

9/11 Attacks (2001): a major shift in global security and foreign policy.

COVID-19 Pandemic (2020): A global health crisis that disrupted daily life, economies, and international relations.

In the book of Genesis several of the absolutely most world changing events happen in just the first twelve chapters. In Genesis 3 after the tragedy of the garden the world is cursed; in Genesis 6-9 the total wickedness of men's hearts led to it being destroyed by a flood. In Genesis 11 after the great pride of trying to assert themselves at Babel judgment falls again and the world is scattered to the winds.

Three times God's divine displeasure resulted in His great wrath and judgment on the world. That's three strikes, mankind should be out. Then Genesis 12 begins with the Word of the Lord came to Abram.

This is an unexplainable verse in the Bible. So let me explain why it is unexplainable.

Why in the world does God insist on blessing a world that mocks, defies, and rejects Him?

Historically, it makes no sense. Just read Genesis 1-11. Personally, it makes no sense.

Abraham is not who you think he is. He is not your favorite grandpa. He was a pagan idolater living in the pagan land of the Ur of the Chaldees. Joshua 24:2 says he served other gods. He was a sinner who deserved to be judged and punished for his sin.

So why did God choose him? We all want to go searching for some grain of goodness, some hint that Abraham was a bit better than everyone else, giving God some reason to choose him. There is none. This man wasn't searching or looking for God, he was busy living his own life, doing his own thing, doing what everyone else was doing.

Historically it makes no sense, personally it makes no sense. This is the Gospel. The Gospel makes no sense. While he was a sinner busy sinning God chose Him purely out of sheer unconditional love. God chose him and credited to him or imputed to him God's own righteousness.

Just a side note here. It is no different for you and me. If you think you know why God chose you and showed you His grace, then you don't have a clue what grace is. There is nothing of intrinsic value or worth or significance or good enough in any of us that God should choose us.

I Corinthians 1:27-29 God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not,

to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

I am not exaggerating when I say chapter twelve of Genesis is one of the most important chapters in all the Bible and in all of human history. This is a Kairos moment, a turning point that overshadows all the greatest, most world changing events in human history, with the exception of Jesus' life on earth. But even that event was triggered by God's choosing Abraham and making a covenant with him.

The story of Abraham is absolutely essential to understanding the purpose of God and the message of the Bible. The covenant of grace is the beginning of understanding the Gospel of grace.

That single event of calling and blessing one ancient Mesopotamian man four thousand years ago continues to reverberate to this very day and is the reason behind why we are here worshipping.

God is the God of history, history is His story and history is grace. We come to a giant step forward in God's unfolding plan of redemption, a plan that leads directly to the coming into the world of the world's Savior.

Genesis 12:1-3, The Abrahamic Covenant promises and blessings.

Genesis 12:1-3 *Now the Lord said to Abram*, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 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. 3 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."

God appeared to Abraham and made a binding covenant in which God made three promises that changed everything and begin undoing the effects of the fall; *three promises*, all part of the plan of redemption God was working in the world.

The Abrahamic covenant promises land, seed/descendants, and blessings for all the families of the world through Abraham's lineage.

First, God promised Abraham *land* in which to make him a great nation. God assured him “To your descendants I will give this land.”

God told Abraham to leave his home, his land, his place and go to a new home, land, place that God would bless him with.

Hebrews 11:8 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.

Second, God promised to give him *seed*, children and descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. God would make Abraham into a great nation.

Genesis 17:6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.

Genesis 22:17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies.

Abram, means “exalted father.” But how could this be possible for a man who isn’t a father?

Genesis 18:11 Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah.

Romans 4:18-19 In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

Grace and faith. He trusted God to do the impossible.

Third, God promised **blessing**, that *all the families of earth* and all the nations would be blessed by Abraham and from him would come many nations and many kings.

Five times in just two verses God says He will bless Abraham, and with an exceedingly great blessing. God repeats this several more times in Genesis.

Genesis 22:18 *In your offspring [seed] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, because you have obeyed my voice.

One man's obedience makes possible the beginning of God's universal plan of salvation. This promise is prophetic. It anticipates the Gospel of Christ. Abraham has a permanent place in God's redemptive plan for the world. The first verse of the NT begins:

Matthew 1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Galatians 3:16 The promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

From the seed of the woman, through the seed of Abraham to the offspring who is Christ, to a multitude of who by faith belong to Christ, and are Abraham's descendants, heirs of God's covenant promise.

Galatians 3:29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Revelation 7:9 I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

This is a universal blessing to all the families of the earth. God didn't chose Abraham just to bless Abraham. This promise is for all families in

every tribe, tongue, language and people. For us and every person who confesses faith in Jesus Christ will receive the blessing of Abraham.

What was lost in the garden, God begins to recreate and restore. Through Abraham would come the blessing of redemption. Abraham is the father of all who believe.

Genesis 12:4-5 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him.

Everything God asks Abraham to give up He will replace.

Give up land, I will give you land.

Give up tribe/kinship, safety security, I will make you a nation.

Give up father's household, your inheritance, and I will give you inheritance.

To follow God you have to leave behind what hinders your following. When Jesus called the disciples they left their nets and followed. Old ways, old habits, old idols and gods.

Abraham is the epitome of faith in the Bible because he is the first man of faith, coming out of a thoroughly pagan world. This is the pattern of the Gospel, to leave sin, self, what we trust in. This is the beginning of the church, being called out from and separated from the world.

God makes Abraham the channel of His blessings to the whole world. There are no true spiritual blessings in this world apart from Abraham and his seed, his descendants, Israel and the church.

Fulfillment in Christ.

Christ's advent is the fulfillment of the covenant God made with Abraham, a covenant of redemption. God promised to send the blessing of redemption on all the families of the world. It is a divine promise that God takes full responsibility to fulfill. It is all grace.

God did not consider two thousand years too long to bring about the fulfillment of His plan. When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman.

“The promise of a land, a seed, and a universal blessing are all realized in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Abraham never saw any of the promises fully fulfilled in his lifetime, having died in his own land as a sojourner; yet he died in faith, having seen the promises and welcomed them from afar (Hebrews 11:13). . . . “The Church of Jesus Christ is the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise of universal blessing God made to Abraham. Everything is happening exactly according to God’s timetable!” (Stephen Amis).

Jeremiah 32:38-41 They shall be my people and I will be their God . . . I will not turn away from doing good to them . . . I will rejoice in doing good to them . . . with all my heart and with all my soul.

Do you realize how spectacular it is for the creator of the universe to say to a human being, “I will be God to you, I will be your God, and I rejoice in you to be my people.”

Romans 8:32 If he did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not with him freely give us all things?

God takes personal responsibility to fulfill all His covenant promises. And God takes personal responsibility to engage and exercise all His power and all His wisdom all the time to do all that is good for us in all circumstances of life, and He does it with all His heart and with all His soul.

God’s covenant of grace cannot fail. We will sin and we will fail. His plans for redemption and blessing are not dependent on our perfection but on His grace.

Implications and application.

Abraham is relevant because God is calling each of us out of the world to live a life like his. Abraham is our father in the faith (Galatians 3:6-9), we are his seed (Galatians 3:29).

To be a Christian is to do what Abraham did. Hebrews 11 calls us to live by the same faith Abraham lived by (Hebrews 11:8-19). We are heirs of Abraham's faith when we believe in Jesus Christ and follow Him in obedience, as Abraham obeyed.

Obedience matters. Is there something in your life right now, where you are not obeying God, not following what you know to be true from His Word? Something you are not trusting Him for? Some sin you are hanging on to, however appealing, attractive, seemingly pleasing.

What inheritance do you want, Adam's or Abraham's? Turn your back on Adam's inheritance, every day make that choice. It is worthless, no, worse than worthless, it promises only eternal misery.

To obey and follow God always involves sacrifices, costly decisions, personal suffering, dying to self over and over and over again. It means setting your eye and your heart on the land ahead, on eternal life, not this world and this life. Live by faith and prove your faith by your obedience and see if God will not bless you with countless blessings, as He continues to do for Abraham's seed.

And as you have been blessed with an exceedingly great blessing, be a blessing to the families of the earth around you this season, and so fulfill the God's covenant.

Prayer: Holy Father, thank you that through Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ we can be heir of your promises. Thank you that we have such a rich inheritance not because we have done anything to deserve it, but because Jesus qualified us through His death and resurrection. And since Jesus died to give us this wonderful inheritance, we can go out into this world in joy, peace, hope and faith, trusting our souls to your grace and mercy. In Jesus name, amen.