

Leaving for More

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm one of the pastors here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it. Which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

This week, we are beginning a series in the story of Abraham, which we find in Genesis chapters 11 through 25. Genesis, the entire book, is the origin story of God's people, his people Israel, beginning with Abraham.

And you'll notice we're not going to do the entire book. We're just doing chapters 11 through 25. And the reason for that is we're actually, big picture, preparing to go back into the book of Romans, the letter of Romans.

[1 : 09] So you'll remember last year we did Romans chapters 1 through 3, and we took a break. Guess what Romans chapter 4 is about? Abraham. Okay, so we're going to continue the pattern of our church, which is to alternate between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

And now this is a rich and layered story, even this specific passage that's in front of us. And so I just want to disappoint you right at the beginning and tell you that we're not going to talk about everything in Genesis chapter 11 and 12 today.

Okay, so our focus this morning is on the call to Abraham to go. What we will not spend a lot of time talking about is the word that's repeated throughout this passage, which is bless and blessing. We're going to come back. We're going to hone in on that next week. And so we're going to just have a clear focus this week, a clear focus next week. If you think, hey, we missed some things, yes, we're coming back.

With that, I invite you to turn with me to Genesis chapter 11, starting in verse 27. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn on your phone.

[2 : 19] You can turn in your Bible. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word. Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5 tells us, And so that's why we're going to read now Genesis chapter 11, starting at verse 27.

Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran. And Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred in Ur of the Chaldeans.

And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai and the name of Nahor's wife Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah.

Now Sarai was barren. She had no child. Terah took Abram his son and Lot, the son of Haran, his granddaughter, and Sarai, his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife.

And they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

[3 : 39] Chapter 12. 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.

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. Verse 4. So Abram went as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him.

Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan.

When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Morah. At that time, the Canaanites were in the land.

[4 : 47] Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your offspring I will give this land. So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negev. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we do praise you, and thank you this morning that you have spoken to us through your word.

And we ask that you would do it again this morning. That you would open our eyes, that you'd unstop our ears, that you would clear our minds, you'd soften our hearts. That we would be able to see, and hear, and believe, and understand everything that's written about you in your word.

Most of all, we ask that you would help us to see Jesus. We'd see him in his glory, and power, and majesty, and holiness, and authority, and his mercy, and his grace, and his love.

[6 : 00] That you would grow our love and our affection for him, our reverence and our awe for him. You'd grow our obedience to him. We come grateful that we don't have to worry this morning about whether we've earned these things or deserve them.

We know that we don't, and so we simply ask for them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Believe it or not, in a galaxy far, far away, I once was a college student.

And when I was a college student, I was involved in what's called Reformed University Fellowship, which is the college ministry of our denomination that we support. And while I was away, you heard from Jonathan Clark and Wes Cowton, who are both ministers, campus ministers, with that college ministry.

Actually, fun fact, Wes Cowton and I were in the same RUF together in North Carolina as students back in the day. And so as being part of involved in this, I was part of what was called the servant team, which was the leadership team for this ministry of students.

And one of the things that we would do is every Sunday night, we would go over to our college pastor's house, and he would do a little teaching. And he would try to do some teaching about, hey, what does it look like to do ministry here on this college?

[7 : 22] If you're like me, there are plenty of sermons and talks and teachings that you have completely forgotten. And there are moments that stand out in your mind that you will never forget.

Where a pastor or a teacher said something and it just stuck with you forever. And I remember one night, our campus pastor was going through Genesis chapter 12, what we just looked at together, and he looked us all dead in the eyes and said this, following God's call always involves loss.

Following God's call always involves loss. And then what he went on to say, and I think this actually might be why I remember this, is he said, you know, on Sunday afternoons, when I think about us meeting on Sunday night, sometimes I think about how nice it would just be to be all by myself and to not do this.

Which seemed a little awkward then, it still does now. And of course, his college students were like, wait, what? This 35-year-old doesn't want to hang out with us all the time? But he said, no, but I get together with you all on Sunday evenings, even as it's a loss to me and what I might want to do with my rest and relaxation because God and his kingdom are worth it.

And he was right. This passage presents us with the call to lose. It's right here. The very first interaction that God and Abraham have, chapter 12, verse 1, is a command, go.

[9 : 09] And it's not just go, it is go from. And we see this increasing intensity. First of all, you're going to go from your country.

Okay, that's bad. Not as bad as what comes next, your kindred, your family. And then at the end, it gets even worse, your father's house, those who are closest to you.

Now, in 2025, it is fair to say that we value our families. It is also fair to say we don't value them anywhere near as much as they valued them in the ancient Near East in the time of Abraham.

Okay, so to wrap our minds around this, we have to think about what it would mean for God to come to us and call us to leave behind all the identity and the things that we cling to for security and meaning.

It would be like God coming to you and saying, go, quit your job, abandon your career, shut down all your social media accounts, throw away your phone forever.

[10:22] Move cities, move countries, start over. That's how radical this command is to Abram, right? If he's leaving his father's house, he's not gonna be able to email them.

He's not gonna be able to put a stamp on his letter to Tara's house and send it back, right? He's not gonna be able to call them. No, Abraham is being called to leave everything.

And as we read in Hebrews chapter 11 this morning, God doesn't even tell him where he's going. Just says go.

Brothers and sisters, the point is this. If we obey God's call to follow him in his mission, we will give things up.

If we obey God's call to follow him in his mission, we will give things up. Now, in the context of this passage, it is God's call specifically that Abram and his family would be a blessing to the nations.

[11:38] That's what we see in verse three. In New Testament terms, we would think of the great commission which Jesus gives to his disciples in Matthew chapter 28. Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them everything I've commanded.

This loss looks very practical. While I was gone, you all paid off our building debt. What did we have to do to pay off that debt?

You had to lose money. Right? You gave money to our generosity initiative. You could have done something else with that.

There are things you didn't do because you gave to that, right? There are experiences that you didn't have. Maybe trips, maybe the security of having more savings.

And you lost all that. So that we as a church could follow God and his call for us to be a gospel hub here in Southwest Colorado Springs.

[12:52] That's just one example. That's one example from us here in this community in this period of time. Following God and his call to follow him and his mission means we will lose.

Now I hope you see the flip side. I hope you also see what we've gained. I hope you see what God is doing in this congregation as we continue to follow him more and more.

I hope you see the way he's multiplying the ministry of this church. But what did we have to do? We had to lose. And it's not just about finances, of course.

There's a pastor here in town who likes to say, you know, people are scared of the church because they think the church is after their money. And then he goes on to say, you know what?

It's actually much worse than that. We're not just after your money. We're after everything. We're after all of you, right?

[13:56] Jesus calls our whole selves to follow him. And so we can think of it not just in sense of following God's call specifically obeying him in his mission. We can think of it as the call that he's given us to holiness.

A number of years ago, a friend of mine dated a young woman who had been living in France. She's a Christian. She was living in France with a man that she was engaged to, not married to, who was not a Christian.

And one day she woke up and realized, should not be living with someone I'm not married to, should not be engaged to someone who's not a Christian, who doesn't share my faith.

What did she do? She broke up with him. She moved out. She left France and she moved to the United States. That, brothers and sisters, is a loss.

Following God's call always involves loss. Could be big.

[14:59] It could be small. It could be giving up your Sunday evening to talk to college students about God's word. It could be leaving a relationship and a country because you're convicted about what God's call to obedience means for you.

Question for us is this. Are you willing to give up a lot to follow God?

Are you willing to lose in order to obey God?

To answer that question, we have to answer another question first, which is this. Why? Why? Why is it worth losing?

Why is it worth giving anything up? Is it actually a smart exchange? And I'm going to give you two reasons this morning why it is worth losing to follow God.

[16:17] Reason one, giving it up is the only way you keep it. Reason two, giving it up gets you something better.

giving it up is the only way to keep it. Giving it up gives you something better. First of all, giving it up is the only way that you keep it.

There is a core foundational principle to the way that we think in the world as Christians and you'll find it on page seven of your worship guide in that sidebar on the left. In the created world, you can only truly enjoy what you do not worship.

In the created world, you can only truly enjoy what you do not worship. Now, if the language of worship feels abstract to you, then you can think of it in these terms.

What is the object of your hope? What is it that you hope in? The beautiful things of this world cannot bear up under the weight of your hope.

[17:35] If you place your hope in them, you will crush them and they will crush you. you can only truly enjoy what you do not worship.

There are many beautiful things in this world and they only work when they are downstream of our love for and our commitment to God.

You can think about this in a variety of areas. If you're a parent, your hope cannot be in your kids. Your kids actually can't bear up under the weight of that.

What's going to happen if you do that is you're going to be driven by anxiety, putting pressure that they can't handle onto them and you'll see the whole situation become twisted and marred.

You can't actually enjoy them and raise them unless your hope is in something more and greater, unless your hope is in God. We can come up with a number of other examples.

[18:40] You'll find this on the back of your worship guide, a quote from David Foster Wallace who tells us the danger of worshiping all these other things, of putting our hope in things that cannot bear up under hope's weight.

If you worship money and things, then you will never have enough. Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly.

and when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally plant you. Worship power.

You will feel weak and afraid and you will need ever more power over others to keep the fear at bay. Worship your intellect.

Being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out.

[19:45] In the created world, you can only truly enjoy what you do not worship. Jesus tells us the same thing, Matthew chapter 10.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Giving it up is the only way you will keep it. Second reason I told you is giving it up because you will get something better.

And this gets to answers the question, why is it that Abraham is willing to just go? Verse 4. So Abraham went. Doesn't know where he's going.

[21:07] Is told he's supposed to abandon everything else. So there's this radical act of obedience, which in many ways seems unexplainable, except the author of the book of Hebrews explains it for us.

Brit read this for us this morning. You'll find it on page 3 of your worship guide. Verse 10. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

Abraham went because he was looking to something better. And it says it again at the end of that passage.

Verse 16. 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.

Abraham is willing to leave one place, because he is looking to a better place. Brothers and sisters, the same is true for us.

[22 : 29] We will not be willing to lose unless we have a vision of something better. It's not a coincidence that right after Brit read that, we sang the song, O Jerusalem.

that is a song about us as a Christian community looking towards and longing for something better and more beautiful.

And what is it? We're looking that they have told us of a city where all tears are wiped away. Is that worth losing for? Yes.

And every shadowed valley is washed in the endless day. Last verse. They have told us of a city where all death will be undone.

Is that better than the current place we're in right now? Yes. Is it worth losing right now for a city where death will be undone?

[23 : 33] Of course. and all our tearful mourning gives way to healing song. I hope when you come and as you come to our church on Sunday morning you realize we are not here simply to go through the motions and do church and be at another worship service.

We're not singing random songs that we pulled together because churches are supposed to sing. No, we are coming here together to be reminded of what is most true and most real.

And we're here to stir up our hearts as we repeat the truth to ourselves and one another about what is more true than anything else. That God has prepared a city and it is better than anything that you would give up here and now.

Jesus tells us, John chapter 14, in my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

Christian, Jesus is preparing a place for you and it is worth giving up everything for.

[25 : 07] How do I know that's true? How do I know that we can trust Jesus' words? We trust Jesus' words because of his death and his resurrection.

The apostle Paul calls Jesus' death and resurrection the down payment on the future. That Jesus has put down the earnest money to show that he's serious.

Right? He has not just given us words, he's given us himself. Are those rooms your line of sight?

Is heaven your horizon line? if you are going to live the Christian life, at some point, it must be.

We come together here on Sunday mornings, week after week, to reset and reorient where our eyes are looking. What is the future that we're hoping for?

[26 : 17] What is the object that can bear up under the weight of our hope? It's that vision, that truth, that reality that helps us understand what is of greater importance and what is of lesser importance.

In her book, Tunnel 29, Helena Merriman tells the story of Joachim Rudolph. And Joachim decided in the summer of 1962 that he was going to dig a tunnel from West Berlin to East Berlin.

This is during the Cold War. He wants to help people escape from being under communism. And so, of course, during the Cold War, the Berlin Wall is keeping East Berlin.

Where they are, they cannot escape, they can't move to where there's freedom, they can't escape communism. And so, he works all summer for this tunnel, and he eventually finishes it. And as he finishes it, he encounters one almost insurmountable problem.

There are no telephone lines between West Berlin and East Berlin. And without any telephone lines, there is very challenging for him to actually tell people in East Berlin where and when they're going to escape.

[27 : 40] The only way to do it is to send someone across. And this is possible. West Berliners are allowed to cross over into East Berlin.

It's just East Berliners can't go into the West. But no West Berliner wants to do it because the communists have realized, hey, we're actually not going to punish the East Berliners trying to escape that harshly.

You know who we're really going to punish? We're going to punish the West Berliners who are organizing the escapes. We're not going to go after the sheep. We're going to go after the shepherds. And so it gets to a point where it's almost a death sentence to cross over because what happens if you're caught?

If you are caught, your life is essentially over. The communists reserve their cruelest punishments for West Berliners who help East Berliners escape.

And so they've dug this tunnel. no one is willing to go over and tell the East Berliners the details except for one person.

[28 : 51] Just as they are giving up hope, they find someone, someone who will do it for the most primal reason of all.

they find a man named Wolf Dieter Sternheimer. What makes Wolf Dieter different than every other West Berliner? Wolf Dieter's girlfriend is in East Berlin.

And they go to him and they say, look, we have a tunnel and you know what? We'll let your girlfriend come over to West Berlin if you go to East Berlin and tell everyone.

the book says this, Wolf Dieter didn't need long to decide. He knew this was the only way to get his girlfriend out.

Brothers and sisters, plenty of people in West Berlin had the right world view. Plenty of people in West Berlin understood intellectually the evils of communism.

[29 : 57] Right? The understanding wasn't enough. They did not have a strong enough vision of the future to risk everything.

Wolf Dieter did. Many people were willing to dig a tunnel from the West where it was safe. Only one man was able to cross over to the East where it was not safe.

Why? Because he had a love and a longing and he saw something better. And he was willing to risk everything.

By the way, he and Renata get married and have two kids. Same is true of Abraham. Same is true of us.

For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God. Let's pray.

[31 : 04] Our Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you that you have prepared a city where all death will be undone. We ask that you would remind us of that truth, that it would become our horizon line, that we would look forward to it and we would be willing to do what it takes to be there.

We thank you that Jesus has given himself, that he's died for our sins and risen from the dead, that we know that we can trust in the future you have for us. We ask all of these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. I invite you to stand for our closing hymn.