

Glory with words, Glory with Wealth

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm the pastor 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 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 morning, we're continuing our series in the book of Genesis. Genesis tells the story of the origin of God's world in verses chapters 1 through 11.

And then it tells in chapters 12 to the end, the story of God's people, the origin of Israel beginning with Abraham. In fact, that's our focus together. We're not looking at the entire book.

[1 : 01] We're looking at chapters 11 through 25 because that is the story of Abraham. We're doing that for two reasons. First, to prepare us to go back into our series in the book of Romans, we will pick back up in chapter 4, which is about Abraham.

The second reason is because the story of Abraham helps us ask the question, what does it look like to follow God in faith? The last couple weeks, we've looked at the story of Lot, Abraham's nephew. Last week in chapter 14, there was, you'll remember, this great war. Lot gets caught up in the middle of this conflict because of his decision to live in Sodom, and he's captured.

We saw Abraham goes and he rescues him. We're reminded of God's great grace to Lot and God's great grace through Abraham, which is true of us as well.

God has great grace to his people, which he shows through his people. The question this week as we come to the second half of chapter 14 is, what happens after success?

What do we do with it? Some people say success is actually more dangerous than failure. How is Abraham going to respond to this victory?

[2 : 27] It's with that that I invite you to turn with me to Genesis chapter 14. You can turn in your Bibles. Genesis is the very first book in the Bible, so that's one easy way to find it.

You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your worship guide. 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 read now Genesis chapter 14, starting at verse 17.

After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shabbat, that is the king's valley.

And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram by God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.

And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And Abraham gave him a tenth of everything.

[3 : 44] Verse 21, And the king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself. But Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich.

I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share.

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 we thank you again for your word that you've given to us, that you don't leave us to figure it out and make guesses, but instead you have shown us the way to go.

We ask that you would be at work this morning in a powerful way by your Holy Spirit, that you would do what you talk about in your word. You would use the Holy Spirit to help us see spiritual things, that you would open our eyes and our ears, you'd soften our hearts, you'd clear our minds, that we would hear and understand and believe everything that you have for us in your word.

We ask that you would use it to grow our love and affection, our reverence, our all, our obedience to Jesus Christ. We ask all of these things in his name. Amen.

[5 : 26] In August of 2011, no, 2000, in August of 2000, the summer I turned 11, my family took a trip to Easley, South Carolina, which is sort of a bedroom community of Greenville, and we went there to help an older relative of my mom's who had lived there for a long time, and we went to help her with her house and her yard, and so we did a number of things.

One of the things was we trimmed a bunch of bushes. Because of the location of her house, she was right by a stop sign, and so the trimming of the bushes did not just help her, it actually helped everyone who went by that street.

And so at one point, some neighbors stopped by to thank my parents, you know, thank you so much for everything you're doing for the neighborhood, etc., etc., and my parents said, you know, what you'd expect, oh, you're welcome, we're glad to help, blah, blah, blah.

What stood out to me, though, is I remember my parents debriefing that interaction later in the day, and they were kicking themselves. They said, we should not have said, you're welcome. We should have said, we're here to be the hands and feet of Jesus, or we love Jesus.

We should have used that opportunity in some way to share about our faith in Christ. And as an 11-year-old in the summer of 2000, that made a big impression on me.

[6 : 54] Oh, my parents are frustrated that they lost this opportunity to share the gospel. They should have done that. They did something else instead.

Question of this passage, as I've told you, is how do we think about success? Who gets the thanks? Who gets the honor, the glory, the praise?

Do we congratulate ourselves? Do we mention God? As we come to this story, Abraham, in a certain way, deserves a ton of credit.

You'll remember the first half of chapter 14. He is coming back, right? Lot, his nephew, has gotten caught up in this conflict with all these kings, at least nine kings.

Abraham goes. He risks his network and his wealth and his time. He's victorious. He comes back. And so it's clear, Abraham is the biggest dog in the kennel.

[7 : 57] Okay? No one is greater or more powerful than him. And so there's an after party. This after party happens in the Valley of Shabbat. That's what we see in verse 17.

By the way, this valley is in the area of Jerusalem. And he's met by two kings here. First, the king of Sodom. That makes complete sense.

He has just rescued Sodom. So, of course, this king would come to meet him, right? We would think he's coming to meet to thank him. He owes Abraham. The technical theological term is big time.

And then we have verse 18. We have this other king, this random king, Melchizedek, king of Salem, who we've never heard of before. If you look back in the list of kings, the beginning of the chapter, he doesn't show up.

So, unlike the king of Sodom, it's not clear why exactly he is here. Salem, though, you need to know, is short for Jerusalem. So, the king of Salem is the king of Jerusalem.

[8 : 56] The Valley of Shabbat is near Jerusalem, right? It all begins to make sense. Now, I need to pause for one second and say very briefly, if you are familiar with the Bible, you know that Melchizedek ends up being a really big deal.

He shows up in Psalm 110. Then he shows up in multiple places in the book of Hebrews, one of which Britt read for us this morning, okay?

Hebrews says, hey, by the way, Melchizedek is a type of Christ, which is a way of saying he points forward to Christ because he has similarities to Christ.

So, Melchizedek's a big deal. We'll find that out later. However, we would need a sermon on Hebrews chapter 7 to unpack all of that. So, sometimes what happens is when someone preaches on Genesis 14, they actually preach a sermon on Hebrews 7.

We, however, are not in Hebrews 7. We're in Genesis 14. Okay, so I'm going to say that briefly about Melchizedek. We could spend a whole hour or more talking about all the things that

happened with Melchizedek, but we're going to focus in on the point of this passage, which is this. [10:12] Abraham and Melchizedek give all honor and glory to God. Abraham and Melchizedek give all praise, honor, and glory to God.

Abraham may be the biggest dog in the kennel, and he knows victory comes from God and God alone.

Starts out very quickly with the blessing that Melchizedek gives. Verses 19 through 20, he blesses God here. Blessed be Abraham by God most high.

We've heard that before. What did we find out in Genesis chapter 12? The very beginning, Abraham was blessed to be a blessing. So Melchizedek's recognizing, hey, what God promised back in chapter 12, that's coming true.

Abraham's been blessed. He's blessed to be a blessing, and that is playing out. He was blessed, so he's a blessing to Lot. The logic of God's relationship with Abraham is unfolding.

[11:24] So he's giving glory to God with his words. That's what my parents lamented, right? Wow, we should have given praise to God. That's what Abraham and Melchizedek do here.

Why did Abraham win against all those kings? In one sense, he won because of his military skill, right?

He split up into two parts in the middle of the night. In some ways, he won because he had 318 trained men. In some ways, he won because he had great allies who went with him.

Ultimately, finally, fundamentally, Abraham won because God was on his side. Blessed be Abraham by God most high, possessor of heaven and earth.

Verse 20. And blessed be God who has delivered your enemies into your hand.

[12:38] What do we do with success? We praise God for the victory. We praise God for the victory.

Verses 19 and 20 reminds us, Abraham is not great. God is great. I've been telling you that Genesis presents this question, what does it look like to follow God in faith?

It looks like this. We, like Abraham, give him all the honor and glory and praise. We wake up every day looking to God.

We wake up every day recognizing that success comes from him and from him alone. Many, many years ago, when I was at a church in Virginia, I had a man tell me offhand that churches need to switch pastors every once in a while.

And the reason he said that this needed to happen is so you could get some fresh illustrations, some new stories. I'm not sure I agree with that. But I'm going to tell you a story that I've told you three other times before.

[14:04] And I apologize, but I am sorry in no way. Because as they say, repetition is the mother of memory.

If you're with us for a while, you know I like to talk about Corrie ten Boom, who was a watchmaker in the Netherlands during World War II. She hid Jews. And because of her work of hiding Jews, she was arrested, and she spent the majority of 1944 in a Nazi concentration camp.

She then went on to have a wildly successful international career in writing and speaking. And so at one point, someone asked her, hey, what do you do to manage all this success?

How do you keep it from ruining you? And she said this. This is on the back of your worship guide.

When people come up and give me a compliment, Corrie, that was a good talk.

Or, Corrie, you were so brave. I take each remark as if it were a flower. At the end of each day, I lift up the bouquet of flowers I have gathered throughout the day and say, here you are, Lord.

[15:12] It is all yours. What are Abraham and Melchizedek doing? They are taking Abraham's great victory, his surprising victory, his military dominance, and saying, here you are, Lord.

It is all yours. Are we that kind of people?

Do we tell others about how God has provided for us? Not in some sort of showy or performative way, but in this sincere and earnest way of saying, you know what?

I'm really blessed. And I'm blessed ultimately not because I was lucky. I'm blessed not because I was some sort of self-made man or woman who was smart enough and gritty enough.

No, I'm blessed because I have a God who's been generous with me. Are we that kind of people?

I'm blessed because God truly cares for me.

[16:28] It's what Abraham and Lot believe. It's what we as Christians believe as well. I say this too.

It's especially easy to lose sight of this as we age, if we experience a lot of success. The more your net worth grows, your bottom line increases, the more success and power you experience in life, the easier it is to thank yourself.

When I was in seminary, I had a professor who walked into class one day and he told this story. He said, you know, when I was a professor my first couple years, my prayer life was a lot better because I was barely keeping my head above water.

And now I've been teaching these classes for years and I know my material inside and out. And when I come in here, it's easy for me to think I've got it.

I figured it out. But I actually need to return to the Lord in the same way I did 10, 15, 20 years ago. You'll see this on page seven of your worship guide.

[17 : 50] It says, in horses and chariots.

But the victory comes from the Lord our God. Remember, it's in God's glory that we discover our good.

Praise, praise to God, protects us from the self-reliance that can lead to failure. Are we the kind of people who know that our blessing is from God most high, the possessor of heaven and earth?

Of course, talk is cheap, right? Anyone can learn to say the right things.

Saying things like, man, it's all because of God. That's the reason for all my success. That can be performative, right? Can be what we say because we've learned. That's like what churchy people are supposed to say.

[19 : 28] That's what's socially expected on a Sunday morning. Thankfully, that's not the only thing that Abraham does here. The greater test, what's really more telling than our words, is what we do with our money.

Abraham doesn't just give glory to God with his words. He gives glory with his wealth. Verse 20, at the end, we have this surprising note. Abraham gave him a tenth of everything.

So Abraham has all this spoil. He's taken in war. He shows up to Melchizedek and gives him what we call a tithe. 10% of everything he's gained.

Britt talked just a minute ago about our tithes and God's offerings and what we mean by God's tithes and our offerings. What we mean by that is that the 10% belongs to God. That's actually already his.

We just need to give him what belongs to him. The offering is anything that's above and beyond that. So he comes. He gives God what is his, his due, his credit for the victory.

[20 : 39] Now, why is he doing this to the random priest Melchizedek? Well, we find out verse 18, Melchizedek is priest of God most high.

So Abraham is sort of secondarily giving it to Melchizedek. Primarily, ultimately, he's giving it to God. So he's not just recognizing God's work in his words.

He's putting his money where his mouth is. Yes, I'm going to let my bank account show that I believe the victory is from you. And giving that away does a couple things.

First of all, it is an act of praise. Money shows value. Why are you frustrated if you don't get paid enough at your job? Because you think I am what?

Worth more than this. They don't recognize my value. When we give to God, we're saying we recognize that God deserves all honor, glory, and praise.

[21 : 40] He is actually the one who's provided the victory. Not just an act of praise, though. It's also an act of trust. When we give our wealth to God, we're saying, I trust you're going to provide for me.

I trust there will be more money later. If I didn't believe that, it wouldn't make any sense, right? I would need to hoard as much as I can for the future. So Abraham's saying, on the one hand, God is the source of the victory.

And on the other hand, God will be the source of future victories. I don't need to worry about hoarding and saving as much as I can. God will continue to keep his promises. God will continue to be faithful.

Abraham doesn't just give his resources, though. That's in some ways expected for what happens in the Old Testament. He does something even more shocking. Abraham also rejects resources.

The king of Sodom comes here, verses 22 and 23, and he tries to make a deal. Verse 21, give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.

[22 : 53] We'll make a little deal here. I know you, Abraham, have the victory. Actually, kind of all of this belongs to you, but how about you give me the people, you know, just as sort of a favor, you keep the things.

And Abraham would be completely within his right to receive those things. He's the victor, right? There's nothing wrong about the victor taking the spoils.

The king of Sodom should be grateful. Abraham has saved his skin, literally. And Abraham says, no, I'm not going to take that money. Why?

I want God to have the glory for every thread and every sandal strap. Even the smallest things. I don't want to open up any sort of option for you to gain glory that belongs to God alone. I don't need your money. Because God has the cattle on a thousand hills.

[23 : 57] A pastor at another church told me a story recently of meeting with someone who was very wealthy. That person came to them and said, you know what? I don't like how things are going, so I'm going to pull all of my money from this church.

And this pastor was a little spicy. And without thinking, he said, well, God can replace that tomorrow. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

Abraham wants to make sure that God gets the glory for every thread and every sandal strap. It's wisdom in this world to not leave any money on the table.

It's not Abraham's philosophy. Abraham says, I don't want to leave any glory on the table. I don't want to get in the way of anyone praising God for anything.

My dependence on God, the glory to him, is more valuable than any spoil. It's a different calculus.

[25 : 15] That's the calculus of someone who trusts God, that believes that God's promises are real and true. That's the same belief that empowered Abraham to go and rescue Lot, right?

God promised him the land. Why wouldn't he go? He has nothing to lose. God has guaranteed everything. Abraham here is entitled to everything, keeps nothing.

Because God and his glory are more important. It's easy to say we trust God's promises.

Our finances show whether that's really true. Hebrews chapter 13.

Remember Hebrews 7 talks about Melchizedek. I think he shows up in 8 as well. Hebrews 13 tells us the logic of this. The author says, Keep your life free from the love of money and be content with what you have.

[26 : 29] For he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Why is Abraham so light with the spoil? Because he believes God's promise.

He knows there will be more money. God will never leave him nor forsake him. Do our bank accounts show that we believe that?

That God is the one who protects us? I want to talk just for a moment briefly about the other king, the king of Sodom.

Melchizedek has a heavenly perspective on an earthly battle. Right? In an earthly sense, Abraham conquers. In a heavenly sense, God is the one who wins.

The king of Sodom has a human perspective on an earthly battle. The king of Sodom rolls in. Can't even say thank you.

[27 : 44] Just wants to cut a deal. No praise to God. No thanks to Abraham. It's just business. And what have we been told about Sodom?

Last chapter, chapter 13. They were great sinners against the Lord. Great sin can look like many things.

It includes refusing to give honor and glory to God. Remember I told you a number of weeks ago about my friend who told me, well, I'm not a Christian, but I act like one.

And I said he acts like one in many superficial ways, but not in the most important way. And the most important way is to worship the living God. Yeah, he may not commit adultery.

That's great. Great wickedness includes this. Not simply a mistake. No, this is table stakes. This is the way of the Christian life.

[28 : 59] How are we able to do that? How do we know that God will never leave us nor forsake us? We have greater reason to hope than Abraham.

And we have greater reason to hope because we have seen what Abraham only looked forward to, which is the one to whom Melchizedek as a type points.

We have a greater hope because we have seen Jesus Christ. We've seen him come, live the perfect life that we should have lived. We've seen him die the death that we deserved.

And we have seen him risen from the dead. We know, even more than Abraham does, that God keeps his promises. Author of Romans, Paul tells us this, Romans chapter 8.

He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

[30 : 06] In other words, God has given you Christ. Of course, he'll provide everything else. So we give him our glory.

We give him our wealth. Because he cares for us. So that's why we can sing. For from him, through him, to him is everything.

To God be the glory forever and ever. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you. We bless your name that you have given us so many victories in this life.

Most of all, the victory of our Lord Jesus over sin and death. We ask that you would root that deep in our hearts. That it would overflow in risky praise, generosity, obedience.

That we would not leave a thread or a sandal strap on the table. We would give it all to you. We ask all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

[31 : 13] Amen. Amen.