

*So Abraham Went...*  
*Genesis 11:10-12:10, April 21<sup>st</sup> 2024*

The American aviator, Jimmy Doolittle, is famous for his heroic and visionary leadership in the retaliatory bombing raid on the Japanese mainland 4 months after Pearl Harbor. But an even lesser-known accomplishment of Doolittle's took place in 1922, when he completed the first cross-country flight in under 24 hours... taking off from Pablo Beach, now Jax Beach FL, and landing in San Diego 21 hours later. Doolittle's plan was to fly through crystal clear skies, under the white light of a full moon but all that changed when his plane was swallowed up by unforeseen, black storm clouds. When he wasn't being battered by turbulence or blinded by flashes of lightning, he was rocketing through total darkness. Until that night, Doolittle, like every other pilot that had ever taken to the skies, flew by sight, relying on their own senses to take off, navigate, and land the plane. But that night, Doolittle found that the only way to safely steer through the storm was to rely on his instruments rather than his sight.

Tonight, we come to the amazing story of Abraham. Now if "faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things *unseen*" (**Heb11:1**), Abraham's story is also about a man flying blind; a man who walked not by sight but by faith as he trusted in the promises of God. **Heb11:8**, "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*." In turning the page from Gen11-Gen12, we cross over the greatest thematic threshold in the book. Thus far, we've been exploring **primeval history**: the record of the 4 events upon which the rest of the Scriptures stand: (Creation, Fall, Flood, Babel). But the rest of Genesis (12-50) is focused upon **patriarchal history**, detailing not 4 events, but the lives of 4 men: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The transition from primeval to patriarchal history is smoothed by a genealogy in Gen 11, of which we are wise to note 3 things. First, when paired with Gen5, this genealogy reveals that 2,000 years has passed from Adam & the creation of the world to Abram (not billions, millions or even tens of thousands of years). Second, this genealogy reveals that man's life expectancy is withering on the vine. In Gen5, the average life span was 850, but now in Gen11, that span is just 350. Third, this genealogy is a precious link in the golden chain of the covenant line of Christ in Luke3! But tonight, I we will look through the lens of Abram to see that ***the Christian life is a journey of faith***.

That journey of faith begins with ***a call of faith (v1)***. 32 y-o, Marie never met her father. She was raised by her mother and grandmother. She remembered, "Growing up as a child, I longed for my father. Longed for the hugs from the man I came from. Longed for those father daughter dances-Longed for love." One day, she got a phone call that changed everything. It was her long, lost father and after 32 years he wanted to meet. When the day finally arrived and they walked towards each other across a parking lot, she remembered, "He was tall. He was handsome. He had tears. And I looked just like him. I cannot even begin to put to words how it [felt] to look into the eyes of the man I came from."

Abram's story begins with a life-changing call from his Heavenly Father, the one that had made him in his own image for his own glory. For so many reasons it was a call that never should have happened. In just 11 chapters, humanity has been *depraved* by the fall, *destroyed* in the flood, and *dispersed* at Babel. Even the blessed line of Shem has turned aside in idolatry: **Josh24:2** 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.'

But despite the unabating evil in the human heart, God kept coming in unrelenting love. You see, Abram's story isn't ultimately about Abram. It's a story about God, and his amazing grace and faithfulness displayed in the life of a sinner who did nothing to deserve it. Abram was a

godless pagan from Ur. He wasn't trying to find God and yet, God found him. His story begins with the words: "Now the Lord..." *And your story is no different.* If you are a Christian tonight; if you have claimed Christ as your Lord and Savior, it's only because He first claimed you. If you love the Lord, it is only because he first loved you from eternity past. Your salvation is wholly the work of a Holy God. Your deliverance is solely due to His divine initiative. Even the faith by which you received the grace of God is itself a gracious gift of God. So, we must relinquish any credit for our salvation. Like Abram, we are debtors to mercy alone.

*From what does the Lord call Abram?* He calls him to leave his country (his place), kindred (his people) and Father's house (his possessions). That's everything. He calls Abram to love him more than anything else in the world. *Did not our Lord Jesus demand the same of his disciples when he walked the earth? Mk1:16-20* "Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon & Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. & Jesus said to them, 'Follow me, & I will make you become fishers of men.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. & going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. & immediately he called them, & they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him." God called Abram to "let good and kindred go"... to leave everything for his sake. *For what purpose?*

*To what does the Lord call Abram?* "to the land that I **will** show you." & *Where's that?* Abram doesn't know because God hasn't told him yet. He calls Abram to trust & obey. To walk by faith and not by sight.

The impala is a magnificent animal. It can jump 10ft high & 30ft long in a single bound when fleeing a predator. But when an impala is put in captivity, zoo keepers only keep them behind a 2-foot fence. **Why?** Because an impala will not leap unless it can see where it will land. *We're just like that aren't we?* Or am I the only one who has prayed, "Lord I will do anything you call me to and go anywhere you want me to go so long as you make it clear." That's code for: "just don't make me fly blind, don't make me walk by faith... because that's frightening." It's one thing to follow the Lord when we can see where & why we're going. When it makes sense to us. But it's another thing entirely to trust him & obey him when we can't see where that trust and obedience is leading. "Lord, you've told me to pray & I've been praying for relief. But nothing's changing. Maybe it's time to stop." "Lord, you've told me to love my wife or to respect my husband, but my marriage is such a disappointment & I don't see any hope. Maybe it's time to quit." "Lord, you've told me to trust your purposes through my pain, but I can't see why you would allow me to suffer so. Don't you love me? Maybe it's time to stop loving you."

When I start asking questions like these it usually because I've forgotten 2 things. I've forgotten: Who God is. He's my King, Creator and Redeemer. He doesn't report to me or owe me an explanation for his providence in my life. "The secret things belong to God" (Deut 29:29). *Isn't this why he answers Job's questions with questions (Job 38)?* He is my loving heavenly Father who does all things well and who knows what I need. If I don't know "why?" it's because I don't need to know. He is my Christ who died on the cross to save me because he loves me immeasurably. If he has purchased me with his blood, surely he has purchased my trust.

I also forget what he has promised: **Rom8:28**, "He's working all things together for the good of those who love him." **Jms1:3** "The testing of your faith produces steadfastness." **Is.43:2**- "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned & the flame shall not consume you." When the Lord calls us to fly blind, we need to stop waiting on answers to the "why's" & be content to fly blind through the storm, relying on the instruments of our faith and clinging to the person and promises of God.

God's precept "Go from your country" was balanced by God's promises (2-3). Notice the exchange here: yes, Abram was called to make a great sacrifice, but the reward of his faith infinitely outweighed what was required of him. No one ever gives God more than God gives in return. Abram is living proof of Jesus heavenly math in *Mk10:29-30*-Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or bros or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake & for the gospel, who will not receive a 100-fold now in this time, houses & bros & sisters & mothers & children & lands, with persecutions, & in the age to come eternal life.

*What does God promise? Progeny* (I will make of you a great nation). *Prosperity* (I will bless you and I will make your name great). *Protection* (I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse). *Property* (12:7)- "To your offspring I will give this land." Now, In the weeks to come we'll unpack these promises in greater detail, but tonight, let's focus just on v3...*what does it mean that through Abram all the families of the earth shall be blessed?* In Gal3, Paul called this good news: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith... so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith(*Gal3:8-9, 14*).

You see, this promise isn't new! It's an echo of the promise first given in Gen3:15, that the seed of the woman would come & crush the prince and powers of darkness and save his people from their sins and restore the very cosmos by cleansing it of corruption and death. God preached the Gospel to Abram: Jesus is coming with salvation in his wings to gather his people to himself throughout all time and space, from every tribe, people, language, and nation by surrendering his own sinless life upon altar of divine justice, to save his people from their sins and the wrath of God. And this Savior would come into the world Abram's line. "in you..." That's good news.

Next, we see the *course of faith* (marked by walking and worship). These may be some of the most important words of the entire Bible: *So Abram went*. He believed in the promises of God so completely that he was willing to sacrifice everything (home, family, future) & set out for an unknown land, surrounded by enemies, with a barren wife through he was to somehow father a great nation, all because God told him to. *Abram's faith had feet!* Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments." *How great then was Abram's love for the Lord?* We're out of breath by v.9 because it's exhausting. *Journeying phrases...* Abram's life teaches us that the course of faith is one of pilgrimage, one of walking and effort. This world is not my home I'm just a passing through... passing through in hot pursuit of Christ and his likeness.

Abram's faith is marked not only by waking, but also by worship. As Abram journeyed through the godless lands of the Canaanites, he left behind a trail of altars (beacons of the true religion) upon which blood sacrifices were made, shadows of the ultimate sacrifice that Christ, Abram's descendent, would make 2000 years later on a cross outside of Jerusalem to reconcile us to God. That's what the Christian life is all about... walking in faith and worshipping the God of grace. So, wherever the Lord calls you to go... maybe through a dark valley, or over a broad wearying plain, or high up on a triumphant peaks, keep putting one foot in front of the other, keep your eyes fixed on Christ, keep your heart anchored in his word, as he brings us home to Canaan.

Our hymn of response was penned in 1770 by Thomas Oliver, who after attending a Jewish Sabbath evening service, took one of their Hebrew hymns of praise called the Yigdol and set it to theologically complete lyrics. You think it's long now... but Oliver wrote 12 stanzas!

*"The God of Abraham praise, Whose all sufficient grace Shall guide me all my happy days, In all my ways.*

*He calls a worm His friend, He calls Himself my God! And He shall save me to the end, Thro' Jesus' blood.*