

Sermon - Promises to Bless (Gen 12.1-9 - 11.27-12.9)

Clint Le Page

Main Point – God blesses Abraham, and he blesses us through Christ, by faith.

When you think of making & keeping promises, what comes to mind?-----

Or Who comes to mind?-----

For me, my wife Kirsti's grandparents come to mind.(SLIDE)

Bill and Thelma Mickelson, her Nan and Pa.

They'd not been married long when Peter, their firstborn arrived, but soon Thelma was in hospital for months with Tuberculosis.

Not long after that, in May 1943, Bill accepted the call to join the war.

He was gone for nearly 3 years, serving in the Solomon Islands in WW2.

Thelma was left to raise her son on her own, and rarely heard any news from him.

Then, when Bill returned home, he didn't want to talk about the traumatic things he'd witnessed and experienced.

But for decades, through ups & downs, Kirsti's Nan & Pa stayed faithful to each other.

I witnessed their love, care and commitment.

They kept their marriage promises to each other.-----

Maybe when you think of promises, you think of the promises you made to trust & follow Jesus at your profession of faith or baptism?

Or maybe you think of people's broken promises?-----

Today in the Bible, we meet the God who makes promises, and always keeps his promises. And we meet the God who calls us to believe his promises.-----

If you've just come to Bundy in the last few weeks, this passage in Genesis 12, might seem like it comes out of nowhere.

But I hope you'll see how it points us forward to Jesus, who fulfils promises from thousands of years earlier.

And he is the one we find life and blessing through.-----

Before we had our 3 Meet Jesus Sundays, we were in the book of Genesis, thinking about our **Origins**.(SLIDE)

We come back to Gen 12 to finish our series, before returning to Luke's Gospel next week.-----

Maybe you've just started coming to Bundy recently, or like me, you can be forgetful.

So we're going to remember what we've covered.(SLIDE)

This is my **first brief point today, Remember.**

Back in May we started in Gen 1 – and looked over multiple weeks at God's creation of the world, it's creatures and human beings.(SLIDE)

We were made to live under God in relationship with him, but we rejected that, seeking independence.

And our sin meant we suffered the consequences.

But the sin meant from bad to worse.-----

In **Gen 6** the Lord saw that human wickedness was widespread... and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time.'

And what happened?-----

God flooded the whole earth & wiped-out mankind, except for Noah & his family.

And after Noah and the creatures exit the ark, God promised to never again do this.

But we saw in chapters 9-11 that people's hearts haven't changed.

They're still infected with sin.----

People tried to build the Tower of Babel up to heaven.-----

As human beings want to become little gods & kick God off the throne.

But the Lord comes down and separates people over the earth.-----

In chapter 11, ten generations have passed since the flood – nearly 300 years.

Please keep your Bible open, and look at **ch11 v26**.

We're told Terah had 3 sons, one of whom was Abram.-----

As you may know, God later renames Abram, Abraham. (Gen 17:5)-----

Interestingly, Terah had planned to move from Ur of the Chaldeans, in modern-day Iraq, to Canaan.(**SLIDE**)

But he didn't go all the way, and settled in Haran, modern-day Turkey.-----

We're told Abram marries Sarai, and they're childless, **v30**.

That's a vital detail in this story, as we move into the main point, the **Promise of Blessing(SLIDE)**.-----

In **Gen 12v1** the Lord God just speaks to Abram, and says, 'Go out from' or leave, your land, your relatives/ your people, and go 'to the land that I will show you'.

From the ch11 global perspective of peoples, nations, languages, we now zoom in on, one family, and one man.

God makes gracious promises to Abram.-----

I say gracious because Abram's done nothing to make him worthy, or deserving, of these blessings.[see Josh 24:2; Rom 4.9-24]

In fact, God's sovereign grace, election and blessing, is always how God saves sinful human beings.-----

So God simply chooses to speak to Abram, and promises to bless him.-----

The Lord promises Abram 3 things: Land, descendants, and blessing.

In **v1** and **v7** God promises Abram 'land'.

And we'll come back to that.-----

Secondly, he promises Abram's line will become a **great nation**.

But how can Abe become a great nation when doesn't have even one kid?-----

He has a wife. He has servants. But no children, let alone grandchildren.-----

Still, God is promising him offspring.

In **Gen 15(SLIDE)** God promises him descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and the sand on the seashore (Gen 15.5; 22.15).-----

Thirdly, Abe is promised '**blessing**' in **v2&3**.-----

The people building the Tower of Babel wanted to 'make a name for themselves'.

But notice here, the Lord says to Abram, 'I will make your name great'.-----

The word for 'bless' is mentioned 5 times in 2 verses. So it's important.

If you're reading the Bible and you see repeated words or ideas, that helps

you to know it's important, important for the main point.-----

So God promises, 'I will bless you'.(**SLIDE**)

The word 'blessing' in that time and culture made people think: prosperity, wealth, well-being.

And **v5** reveals that Abram was well-off. [&13:2,6; 14.14]

He had wealth and servants, and this would only increase.-----

However, God's blessing describes more than prosperity, it's fundamentally about being favoured by God.

To be blessed by God is to be under his care, protection and favour.-----

And remember the word 'grace' means undeserved favour.-----

Trent lived in Bundoora. He thought he was blessed, because he had a nice car, a spacious new home, and money to go on overseas holidays.

Trent believed in God. He'd grown up in the Catholic church and believed he was a good person, and that's why God blessed him materially.

But then Trent met Tom, and they became friends.

And through Tom's witness Trent came to trust in Jesus.-----

Trent then had his eyes opened to what true blessing was.

His heart was filled with thankfulness that God has shown him favour, in saving him from sin. And it was all by grace.-----

Trent knew relationship with God is the greatest blessing.-----

One which Abram had too.----

Abe was blessed in the future with a child,[Gen 21] with generations.

And with a great name, which Jews, Muslims and Christians all know.

But better than that, Abe had a relationship with God his creator, he heard God's word, and he will have a pivotal role in God's purposes.-----

Abram was blessed

But God also promises to bless others through him.

'I will bless those who bless you'.

Likewise, if you hurt Abram, you'll suffer the consequences.

The message is, he has God's protection, so don't-mess-with-him.

That's what Pharaoh, King of Egypt learns, later in ch12.(v17; 14.15)-----

So God makes these 3 promises by grace, and Abram is asked to do one thing:

"Go out from your land, your people your father's household, to the land I will show you."

But that's a big thing, a very big thing; n' to do that will take a whole lot of Faith.

Faith is my next point.(SLIDE)-----

Remember at the end of ch11 Abram's father decided to move house & country.

They were going to go to Canaan(**point 3 on the map**), but settled in Haran.-----

Abram is living in Haran with his wife and extended family.----

To leave his family is a huge ask.

In that culture, with loyalty to parents hugely important, to leave them is massive.

For Abram to leave his country, his father's family, it meant leaving his inheritance.

It meant putting God number 1 in his life.

It meant putting God first, before loyalty to family.-----

And that putting God first, loving God more, even more than your parents; is something Jesus asks of all of us.

The Lord Jesus said in **Matt 10,(SLIDE)** "The one who loves a father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; the one who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me".-----

Putting Christ first doesn't mean we don't love our parents or children.

Usually it means the opposite, we love them well.-----

But our hearts allegiance and commitment must be to our Lord first.

How are you going at that?-----

Are you loyal to God first?-----

Over family? Over possessions & wealth, and other security?-----

Love Jesus more.-----

So God asks Abram to pack up and move, move to an unknown destination.

Can you imagine that?----- Packing up your family and all your possessions, getting in the car, with the moving truck behind you, and you drive.-----

You just Drive.----- But you don't know where to.-----

It's not like the Grey-nomad's around-Australia-trip, where you hook-up the caravan, for an indefinite period; or the gap-year you take to travel, but you know eventually you'll come home.

This is moving for good, and you don't know where to.-----
Abram shows great faith here.

He just trusts God, and leaves, **v4**.

In faith, this 75 year-old, leaves his country, his family, behind.-----

Now he does take Lot, his nephew.

Lot's father had died, and maybe Abram felt obligated to care for him.

However, the Lord did say, leave your father's relatives.

And Lot, who goes on to make selfish & stupid choices, would only bring a ton of trouble for himself and for Abram.[Gen 13,14,19]

And Genesis is open about how Abram's faith is not perfect.

As we'll see later, he does struggle with doubts and fears sometimes.

But here, here in Gen 12 **v4**, Abram responds with faith.

He shows faith in action.

What a great example of faith and trust Abram gives us.-----

Maybe he remembered his father originally planned to go to Canaan, so he heads there.

He travels over 600 kms to get there.-----

And in **v7** the Lord says: "To your offspring I will give this land."-----

And after hearing God promise to bless him with children & land, notice what he does.

He builds an altar there, he worships the Lord, sacrifices to the Lord, prays to the Lord. As he does where he moves next in **v8**.

Abram is in relationship with God, communicating with & committed to the Lord.-----

Still, to hear God tell this 75 yr-old, 'to your offspring I will give this land', it must have brought mixed emotions.

God giving you a beautiful, bountiful land is exciting, but he still has no kids.-----

Yet faith is being fully persuaded that God can do what he has promised.-----

In believing God's word, Abram will receive all these blessings promised.-----

And do you know it's exactly the **same with us**, God wants us to believe his promises; and **Have faith(SLIDE)**.-----

God calls us to believe that He will do what He says he will do.-----

God wants us to have faith in his promises.

Because, even better than Kirsti's Nan & Pa, God always keeps his promises.-----

I recently led the funeral for Ryan Pillay(**SLIDE**) from our 9am congregation.

A man who came from a Hindu background, but gave his life to Christ.

And I said to everyone gathered at the service, this promise from God: (**SLIDE**)

'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.'-----

And Ryan had done that.

He'd put his belief and dependent trust in Jesus.

And knew that was enough to save him.-----

And Ryan's life of kindness, compassion, sacrificing for others, care for strangers, love for his family & neighbours, it showed his faith.

You see, you can't say you believe in Jesus, and not act on it.

Faith in Christ alone saves, but that faith is always shown in action.-----

And when you do truly trust in Jesus, you will be blessed.

Ryan was blessed with peace in the face of pain, illness, weakness.
He knew he had a relationship with the God who loved him, and he had the sure hope of heaven, where he is now with the Lord.

“How are we blessed?” you may ask.(SLIDE)

‘cause God isn’t promising all of us children or that we’ll own our own land.
Remember Gen **12v3** said, ‘all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you’.----
Abram would have to wait 25 years for a son.
But from Isaac would come Jacob, and from Jacob the tribes of Israel.
And Israel was to reveal God to the world, through their faith and lives and Scriptures.
But more than all this, the way the world is blessed through Abram, is through his far-off descendent, Jesus; the Christ, the Chosen King.-----
Just as God chose one man, Abram, to be the conduit of blessing to others; so God chose one of his descendants, Jesus, to be the conduit of eternal blessing to the world.

Galatians ch3 tells us the promised offspring or seed of Abraham, who would bless the nations, is Jesus Christ.(3.16-**SLIDE**)-----

And that through Christ we are justified/ right with God.(**SLIDE**)

And we’ll think shortly in the Lord’s Supper, that we receive that because Christ took the curse for us, dying on the cross in our place.-----

But being right with God, accepted by God is **the greatest blessing we can ever have**, or ever hope to have.-----

But do you see what **Gal 3 v8-9** is saying?-----

The blessing Christ brings, is received through faith.

Through faith in Christ we are blessed with Abraham.-----[& Heb 11:10-16]

In fact, in Christ we receive every spiritual blessing.

Please turn to Ephesians ch 1.-----

For in **Eph 1:3(SLIDE)** God’s word declares to followers of Jesus that God:

‘has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ.’

And let’s spell out and list the blessings he mentions: (**SLIDE**)In Jesus Christ we are chosen before he made the world, predestined to be holy and blameless.

Through faith in Christ we get adopted as God’s sons & daughters.

V6, we have God lavish his glorious grace on us.

We get redemption, freedom from sin and death and judgement.

Through Christ’s sacrifice we get forgiveness of sins.-----

God makes his will known to us.

We get hope and purpose, **v12**, as we live for the praise of God’s glory

v13, we get the Spirit, God with us now.

And we get a place in heaven, a reservation, with our name on it.-----

Though Jesus we are blessed, we experience God’s favour.

Through Jesus the son of Abraham, we are blessed.-----

So whether or not you have riches and prosperity, fellow believer you are blessed.

You are blessed with greater things than money can buy, and things that you can never lose.-----

Whether or not you feel blessed, the Christian is blessed.

Because of Jesus, you are blessed.-----

We have so many great things that can never be taken from us.-----

We brothers and sisters, have God’s very great and precious promises.-----

So please count your blessings, and name them one by one.-----

And when you are down, or struggling, read this wonderful chapter and remember.---

But I acknowledge that sometimes it is so hard to trust God's word, & keep believing God's promises.

Yes, in many ways we have it better than Abraham.

We have all God's written word, filled with story after story of God's power, God's faithfulness, love and grace.

We have had God's Son, come to live and love, die and rise again for us, for you.

And yet we still find it so hard to trust God's promises when life is difficult.-----

Like for Abraham in **Gen(SLIDE)** when he's in a famine, fleeing to Egypt & fearing for his life, maybe like that you **fear** about the future.

Or fear that your pain or grief will never end.-----

Maybe a fear of failure leads you to lie in your work, or schoolwork?-----

Maybe a fear of rejection leads you to keep silent that you follow Jesus?-----

Maybe a fear of missing out leads you to live one life on Sunday, and another during the week or online?-----

Maybe you fear you can't stop that sin?-----

Or you fear death and the unknown beyond that?

Maybe you fear being alone, or fear being hurt?

Or you fear your overwhelming circumstances will crush you, or never end?-----

Is there something you fear?-----

Even when we're fearful, God wants faith to drive our choices.

When I give in to fear, I fail to have faith in the God who says,

'Do not fear, for I am with you (**Isa 41:10-SLIDE**).

And, nothing can separate you from my love (**Rom 8.28-29**)-----

They are two promises that have been precious to me in hard times.-----

And at Bundy, we have some great examples of people who've trusted God's promises in the face of trials, or things that could easily make us fear.

I think of **Ana** leaving her family, friends and country to go to Asia to help trafficked girls discover life and freedom in Christ.

I think of the **Kurz** family packing up their home and 5 children, to go to PNG, so people can hear and read God's saving word.

They're going and making disciples, trusting Christ's promise – I will be with you always.---

I think of those of you open about Christ to your neighbours, your work colleagues, even when you risk rejection.

I think of those who've been the first in your family to choose to trust & follow Jesus.----

I think of the widows, widowers and singles trusting God in their grief and isolation.

Others trusting God through their medical treatment, or mental health struggle.

I think of **Rachel Smith**, having to lie down much of her life, the family's trials with mold poisoning, chronic conditions and great challenges. And I have been so encouraged by their examples of persevering faith.

Their faith will be worth it, and your faith will be worth it!-----

So pray and keep believing God's word, God's promises, because like Abraham, we look forward to the blessing of a better country, a heavenly one. (**Heb 11.16-SLIDE**)

Abraham blessed the world through Jesus.

And Abraham's faith is the example we should follow.

So trust God's promises, for in Christ we are and we will be blessed.-----

Let's **pray**.