

**Sermon: Radical Faith**  
Preached on November 20th, 2022  
Image Church, Atlanta

**Introduction:**

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite times of the year, getting a chance to hang out with family. Even those you may not be super close with or may not even like very much 😊

And if you're like me, whenever I'm with my family, especially aunts, uncles, parents, I love asking questions about our ancestry, how we got here, getting to know about our family's history.

I love the show (on PBS) called, "Finding your roots" -Henry Louis Gates...

Point is, people want to know about where they come from... who they are...

The New Testament starts in the book of Matthew with something similar, before getting deep into the story of Jesus, it gets into His genealogy... who he was, where he came from.

So let's pretend for a moment this morning that we are at the dinner table with our Uncle Matt, who can recall our ancestry WAY back to the time of Abraham...

**Matthew 1:1-17**

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

*2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, 4 and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of David the king.*

*And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, 7 and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, 8 and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, 9 and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, 10 and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, 11 and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.*

*12 And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, 13 and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, 14 and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, 15 and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of*

*Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.*

***17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.***

So there are a lot of people in this genealogy and there was a LOT of time from the time of Abraham to the time Jesus.

We certainly don't have the time to go through all of these stories and get to know all these people, but I want to look at just ONE major character from this genealogy. And I think there's no better place to start than way back at the beginning, with the story of Abraham... so the beginning of this genealogy starts with our great ancestor, the one and only, "Father Abraham."

Abraham's story starts in the book of Genesis

Genesis 11:27 - 12:1-5

*"27 ...Terah fathered Abram... The name of Abram's wife was Sarai... 30 Now Sarai was barren; she had no child. 31 Terah took Abram his son... 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..."*

Pause: What do we know about Abram in the Bible prior to God calling Abram in Gen 12? Not a lot... We know that he was from the line of Noah's son, Shem (from whom we get the term "Shemite" or "Semite") But not a lot more...

Why Abram? Was there anything inherently special or "good" about him? Maybe? But probably not. Genesis 11 says they lived in the land of "Ur of the Chaldeans" and later "Haran." These were early Sumerian, Egyptian countries, there were no really "followers" of God in these places, so it's not like Abram was living in the midst of pious people who followed God.

So all this to say, we know very little about Abram.

Genesis 12:

*1 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."*

So the promise is... to make Abram a great nation, and that in and through Abram, ALL the families of the earth would be blessed. Now, what's the challenge with this promise?

Out of all the people in the world, God chooses a couple who cannot have children. You see, he has a barren wife. So how would Abram be the “father of all nations” with a barren wife?

Let’s keep reading:

*4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him.... Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan...”*

Now this brings to my first point today:

The situation that Abram is called **TO** calls **FOR** radical trust.

**Point 1: True faith in God requires RADICAL trust.**

Not only is he leaving the comfort, security and riches of his father’s house. He’s also 75 years old! And the biggest issue of them all, SARAI, his wife, IS BARREN! SHE CAN’T HAVE CHILDREN!

Imagine having that conversation with your wife, “Hey honey, I heard a voice from God... hear me out here... He says that we need to leave our family and friends, and me and you are going to be the parents of all nations.”

I wonder what that must have been like? (Especially for her, right? As a barren woman?)

But despite all of this, Abram goes. (RADICAL TRUST)

This must have been super hard. I don’t know about you, but I don’t know how I would’ve done in this situation...

One of the hardest things (as Christians) is to discern God’s will for our lives... Not His “overarching” “big picture” will. We know what God wants for us.

I’m saying the more practical things like,

- “Should I take this job?” (How do I know that it’s from the Lord?)
- “Should I date/marry this person?”
- “Should I move to xyz place?”

Here, Abram is being told to move. He’s told to leave his comforts behind... And he goes.

This is VERY difficult for us... Why do you think this is?

I think if we’re honest, it’s difficult for us to trust God for three reasons:

1. We're not actually "listening" to God... we're doing most of the talking.

Am I Right? Instead of:

- "Should I take this job?" It's, "God I just took this job I need you to bless it"
- "Should I date/marry this person?" It's, "God I'm seeing this person, I need you to bless my relationship"
- "Should I move to xyz place?" It's, "God I'm about to move, I need you to bless me"

So often, it's **US** telling God what we're gonna do and asking **HIM** to make it so, rather than ASKING GOD what HE wants us to do and conforming to that.

2. Because we think we know what's best for our lives.
  - Or actually because we want to be in control. (Opposite of Radical Trust)
  - Clearly, God can't see what I know about me... (sarcasm)
3. The 3rd reason it's difficult to trust God is because we are afraid that God might want us to do something different than what we want to do.
  - Fear that God will ask us to give something up that we don't want to.

What would it look like if BEFORE we do something, we ask God what he wants us to do, rather than telling him what we want him to do for us?

For Abram, there were ZERO questions... verse 1, "God said to Abram, Go" verse 4, "Abram went."

**RADICAL TRUST!**

That's what we're called to.

You may think, this is hard, but we have something Abram didn't... We have the Scriptures, we have History, we have the fulfilled promises of God.

If ANYONE should be able to have radical trust, it should be us, right?

*Intro to second point...*

Let's keep going with our story... Let's fast forward a little bit to another encounter God has with Abram...

We don't have enough time to go through all of this but... I'll give you the highlights...

After Abram leaves his home, he gets into a bunch of different adventures in Egypt, gets into beef with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah because of his nephew Lot, he meets this

interesting character named “Melchizedek... who he gives a 10th of all his stuff...” all this happens over the course of **11 years!** And guess what? STILL NO CHILD!

Think about that... it's been 11 YEARS since God told Abram, *“I will make you a great nation, I will make your name great, etc...”* STILL NO CHILD!

And OF COURSE there's no child... After all, Sarai is barren, right?

But you see, Abram's story teaches us not only that we have to have radical trust/faith in God but that our Faith and trust in God requires RADICAL patience!

### **Point 2: Faith in God requires RADICAL patience (Waiting on the Lord)**

Think about someone promising you something and you don't see it happen for 11 years! Heck, think about not seeing it for 11 days!

You see this generation, more than others, is such a “we want it now” generation... Advances in technology have only fueled our impatience.

We live in a “Microwave” society. Pop something in the microwave and we want it immediately. **Speed** is the modern day mantra... The classic song by Queen describes this generation perfectly “I want it all, I want it all and I want it now.”

That's our cry... Now God!

It was 11 years for Abram and Sarai... But although it had been 11 years, they ended up becoming impatient as well, thinking perhaps God had forgotten about His promises.

And in Chapter 16, I won't read it here, you can read it at home, but they take matters into their own hands. Sarai tells Abram to have a son with her maid, Hagar. And through Hagar, our Great Ancestor Abram now has “the son he's been waiting for...” Ishmael.

We learn later on, that Ishmael is not the Son that God meant, when he told Abram he would be the “father of all nations.”

Nevertheless, God blesses that child, as He so often does with us, He cleans up our mistakes because of His faithfulness, and His awareness of our ignorance..

But it's not without consequences.

Side note: Ishmael and Isaac - Arabs and Jews - all the conflict because Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hands!

So our actions, (getting ahead of God) or failure to WAIT on the Lord can have severe consequences...

But here's some Good news... God will see you through it.

Have you ever had one of those "I think this is what God wants for my life" moments and you do something that was NOT what God wanted for your life?

- Maybe a relationship that wasn't really what God wanted for you?
- Maybe a job you took that you weren't supposed to take?

And then have you ever lost it and you end up losing the relationship or the job, praying that God would give you that person or thing back, rather than saying "God it looks like that wasn't your will, would you please help me get through this (I'm hurting) and I want to do what YOU YOU want for me, not what I "want you to want for me."

This is hard. Listen, if you've been through a difficult relationship or a terrible workplace experience, let me just say, I'm sorry. I don't want to make light of it.

But I want to encourage you today, that just like God blessed Abram and Sarai after their getting ahead of themselves (and God) and not really fully understanding the will of God for their lives at the moment, He can and will bless you. No matter the situation, no matter the hurt, no matter the guilt.

Please take heart, know that God is loving, caring and faithful to His people.

Amen?

Let's continue...

So 11 years have past and we get to Genesis 17:1 (Again, I won't read it but I'll give you the highlights) we fast forward 13 more years to where Abram is now 99 years old, Sarai is now 90 years old... STILL NO CHILD!

In total it's been 24 years since God told Abram to leave his home, etc. and this time God visits Abram again, you would think, this time it was to fulfill the promise.. give him a child, but NOPE, this time He tells Abram to do something pretty strange.

God reconfirms His covenant with Abram but this time he tells Abram to circumcise every male in his household...

Now... Pause for just one minute...

Abram has been out here 24 years waiting on this "God" who told him to leave the comforts of his father's home, they've been in beef with Egyptians, beef with his nephew Lot, beef with the Kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, just trial after trial, and now he comes in talkin bout... "Yo... Can I

have all the dudes gather around me right quick? Umm... God says we need to cut off the foreskins of our... ummm private area... as a sign of obedience to Him..." (RADICAL TRUST)

I don't know about you but I'd be like, "BRUHHH... COME ON MAN!!! I'M OUT!"  
"IT'S BEEN 24 YEARS MAN!!! STILL NO KIDS FOR YOU! GIVE IT UP ABRAM!"

24 years is a long time...

24 years ago was 1998. What were you doing?

Some of you were either not alive or barely walking, or just starting pre-school in 1998.

For context... Let me tell you what was going on in the world in 1998

- I was 27 years old, I had a 2, 4, 5 year old (pretty broke)
- There was NO iPod, iPhone, Nokia was the number 1 phone in the world
- People still rented VHS movies... -AT BLOCKBUSTER VIDEO
- The World Trade Center, twin towers were still around
- Google Launched
- Windows 98 launched
- Taylor Swift was 9 years old...
- Our very own Pastor, Mike McKee was 12 years old!

Point is... 24 years is A LONNNNG TIME AGO! -For us...

So much happened in 24 years for Abram as well...

But what we learn from Abram is that he had unwavering faith!

I don't know about you but I struggle to have that kind of faith.  
Waiting, waiting, waiting and nothing happening?

I remember when we would travel... ("Are we there yet") example (We failed to experience the beauty of the journey because they were so excited about the destination).

In other words, we failed to be in the PRESENT, because we were so worried about the future!  
We failed to see the beauty of the journey because we couldn't wait to get to the destination!

I'm sure Abram couldn't WAIT for future fulfillment of the promises of God, but I believe what kept Abram going, "the FUEL" of his radical trust and patience, was the PRESENT REALITY OF GOD IN HIS LIFE.

Which leads me to my 3rd point:

**Point 3: God's ACTIVE presence (our ACTUAL experience of God TODAY) is the fuel for our faith.**

Abram knew God was PRESENT, he spoke to God, he listened to God, he TRUSTED God, he FELT GOD'S PRESENCE.

He had spoken to Melchizedek, He had spoken to the Messengers that were coming to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He was the one that had been SPOKEN TO by God to begin with.

So of course he felt the presence of God!

So the question is, do you? Do we?

But let me share a word of encouragement, if you're experiencing a lack of faith in God, it's not because you don't believe his future promises of eternal life, it's because you don't believe His promise that He's with you NOW!

If you're failing to believe God it's because you're not SEEING God, TODAY!

Are you experiencing the ACTUAL presence of God in your life today? Or is God just something you hope to experience some day in the future?

I believe God's active presence in Abram's life fueled his faith.  
And I believe God's active presence in your life will fuel yours also.

So let's wrap up our story of Abraham

After Abram circumcised his household, Abram (now Abraham) is 100 years old and his wife Sarai (now Sarah) is 90 years old... And FINALLY we get to Chapter 21...

*Genesis 21:1-7*

*1 The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, **and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised.** 2 And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. 3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." 7 And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."*

Here... 25 years later, God's promise, fulfilled. I should say, THE BEGINNING of God's promise, fulfilled.

It couldn't have been easy, but they endured, with RADICAL patience, trust, faith...



And I LOVE what Sarah says, "God has made laughter for me"

25 years later, Abraham and Sarah are rewarded for their diligent faithfulness, with the son that would make way for Abraham to be the "father of all nations."

Going back to our text this morning, after reading the account of all the generations we see the hinge verse of our story:

*Matthew 1:17*

*17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.*

I've shared with you today, 25 years of one man's life. This passage, tells us that there were 42 generations (14 generations x 3) from the time of Abraham until the birth of the Christ,

That's 1470 years (42 generations at 35 years per generation).

You see, although Isaac was Abraham and Sarah's promised child...

He wouldn't be THE ONE that would make Abraham the father of all nations.

Isaac was a shadow/type of THE SON that Abraham and all of us were REALLY waiting for...

Years later (you can read this for yourself later in Genesis 22)... I will summarize, after ALL these years of waiting, Isaac is born and when is a young boy, God tests Abraham's faith, yet again. He tells Abraham to take his son, his ONLY son, whom he loves, and go to the land of "Moriah" and there, offer his son as a burnt offering...

After all these years of waiting, he gets his son, and now he has to give him up.

But... in typical Abrahamic faith he asks no questions, just obeys and takes his son up to Moriah to sacrifice him...

And we pick up the story in Genesis 22:9

*9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."*

What a remarkable story of faith and faithfulness.

Interesting that God says “now I know that you fear God.”

But that story, was but a shadow, a type, of what was to come...

You see, 1,470 years after Isaac's would be sacrifice, on that same mountain, now named Golgotha, God would walk HIS Son, HIS ONLY SON, whom HE loves, to sacrifice...

- This time, there would be no ram caught in the thicket by his horns to save the son. He would be the sacrifice.
- This time, there would be no one to cry out, STOP. For he HAD to do this.
- ***This time, for the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Samuel, Rahab, David, Solomon, Peter, John, Paul, Mike, Fred, Aaron, Ana, Lauren, Melissa, Jonathan, Randy... FOR THE FAITH OF ALL THOSE who would believe, Jesus died. So that we might be called HIS OFFSPRING***
- ***And so that THROUGH US all the nations of the earth would be blessed***

And so, Church, the story continues...

It continues through us, WE ARE the evidence, (WE, CHURCH), we are the testimony of the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. We are the ones that number *as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.*

Have you stopped to think about that? Christian, that the SAME GOD that spoke to Abram way back then, that was faithful to Abraham and Sarah, way back then and faithful through SO MANY OTHERS since way back then...

The SAME God that brought Jesus into the world, way back then, had you and I in mind before He even gave shape to the earth?!

For the non-believers in here, maybe you've never experienced God at all? You're not alone, neither had Abram, all he did was take a step of faith.

So all God is calling you to do is do the same.

Trust, believe, in the promises of God. In the person of Jesus Christ.

For the Christians in here, have you SEEN, Have you EXPERIENCED, DO YOU NOW experience the presence of that same God in your life?

If so, what does that do for you? What do you do with that good news?  
Let me give you, quickly, 5 things to do, especially this week...

1. **Reflect:** Not only what he's done for you in your distant past, but what He's done for you this year, this week, yesterday.
2. **Rely:** On God, before you make plans and trust that He knows what's best.
3. **Rejoice:** Enjoy the CURRENT presence of God today. Knowing that His active presence is the fuel for your faith.
4. **Respond in Obedience:** Go. Wherever God will send you, As Abram did, in RADICAL, faithful obedience.
5. **Remind yourself of the Gospel:** Read God's word, daily, remind yourself of the goodness of God so that you can tell everyone about His Faithfulness.

We're going to take some time right now to get to do some of these things as we respond in Communion...