

The Reward of a Ready Heart — Delivery

Transcript

Genesis 18 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, February 25, 2024 · Faith in the Waiting

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All right, well thank you Russell and Mary and choir for leading us in worship. If you have your Bible you can open it to the book of Genesis, chapter 18. Genesis chapter 18. And if you don't have a Bible, there should be a pew Bible under your chair. And you can follow along with us in that pew Bible if you'd like. We've been in a series through the book of Genesis and in particular we've been looking at the life of Abraham and seeing his journey of faith. And Abraham, like most heroes of faith, has his good days and he's got his bad days.

And one of the things the Bible does, I think, for our benefit is to show us that even the so-called great men and women of God have problems. The scripture presents them warts and all. And one of the things you need to know if you sense God wanting to do something in your life is oftentimes before God does something really great in the life of an individual or through the life of an individual, there's often a season of waiting and preparation. And that's true not only of individuals, it's also true of churches.

If God is going to use a church greatly, there's also a season of preparation that God uses to develop them and prepare them for the great things that the Lord is going to do. And that was true in Abraham's life and true, I'm sure, in many of your lives as well. And it's important in those seasons of waiting that you not waste the wait. And that's really what we've been looking at over the last several weeks. Is how not to waste the wait when God slows you down and enters or forces you sometimes into a season of waiting on the Lord.

If chapter 16 was about faith getting fickle in that season of waiting and chapter 17 was about what to do when God starts talking in that season of waiting. I would say Genesis chapter 18 and Genesis chapter 19 are about what to do when God comes over in that season of waiting. And really Genesis chapter 18 and chapter 19 are a unit. They go together and initially I was going to preach them as a unit together but in studying this week and thinking about what I wanted to share, the Lord just led me to break those two chapters apart.

And so we're going to look at really three things over the next two weeks that I think Genesis chapters 18 and 19 are about. It's about what happens when God comes over. When God decides he's going to pay you a visit, how do you respond? And there's really three different ways that people respond that you'll see in this text that we're going to look at this morning, half of it this week, half of it next week. And that is three different types of hearts. There's really three characters in the story.

You've got Abraham and his family, you've got Lot and his family, and then you've got Jesus and two angels. Jesus is God coming over to visit. There's a response that Abraham gives, which I'm going to call the ready heart. There's the response that Lot gives, which I'm going to call the not-sure heart, and then there's the response of Sodom and Gomorrah, which I'm going to call the not-ready heart. So you've got the ready heart in Abraham, the not-ready heart in Sodom and Gomorrah. And the not-sure heart, the conflicted, hesitant heart with Lot and his family.

And in Genesis chapter 18, we see Abraham's response to what happens when God comes over, and it's so illustrative, I think, for us of how we can be people who have a ready heart to receive from the Lord when he decides to pay us a visit. So with that in mind, let's look at Genesis chapter 18. We're going to start in verse 1. And I want you to notice the first words out of the gate, the Lord appeared to Abraham. Now he's going to appear in the form of three gentlemen, three guests, but it is not just three gentlemen, it is the Lord.

It's capital L-O-R-D, that's the Hebrew word Yahweh in most of your translations. The Lord appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent during the heat of the day, he looked up and he saw three men standing near him, and when he saw them, look at this, he ran. From the entrance of his tent to meet them, he bowed down to the ground, and he said, my lord, if I have found favor with you, please do not go on past your servant.

Let a little water be brought, that you may wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree. I will bring a bit of bread, so that you may strengthen yourselves. This is why you have passed your servant's way. Later you can continue on. And they replied, yes, do as you have said. And so really Genesis chapter 18 verses 1 to 5 is an example of Abraham practicing hospitality. He's practicing hospitality on three guests. I don't know that Abraham knows this is the Lord. Moses knows it's the Lord. Moses has told us that it's the Lord, but I don't know that Abraham knows it's the Lord, but he's exercising hospitality nonetheless.

This I think is six encounters that Abraham has had with God thus far. If you count them from Genesis chapter 12 onward, you had the initial call, then you had after his rescue of Lot, you've got chapter 17, you've got chapter 15, a couple of sprinkled throughout there. This though is unique because God actually appears to Abraham in human form. Theologians call

this a theophany Theo from the word for God and phonos, which means to reveal. It's an incarnation of God, not the incarnation like we see in Jesus and the Gospels.

But a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ in the flesh to speak with Abram. And he is entertaining these guests, I think, unaware of the fact that they are divine guests. This is in the book of Hebrews, chapter 13, where it says to for Christian people, do not neglect to show hospitality. The reason you're not to neglect showing hospitality, the book of Hebrews says, is because some of you have entertained angels unaware. And I think it's appealing to Genesis chapter 18 where Abraham is entertaining Jesus in the f a flesh and two angels who are alongside of him.

And so the first thing I want us to take away from this, and really the big takeaway from Genesis chapter 18, is that it does not matter how the Lord decides to reveal himself in your life. There will be times where he manifests his presence in certain ways, and then there will be other seasons in which he manifests his presence in a different way. But regardless of how the Lord decides to manifest his presence, it's important for us to have hearts that are ready and responsive. To take advantage of the opportunity.

And that's exactly what Abraham does. I don't know if you noticed it in the text, but the first thing he does when he sees these people is he runs to them. He runs from the entrance of his tent and he meets them. He bows down in front of them, and then he invites them over to his home. And then once he gets them into his home He is quick to tend to their material, physical needs. I broke those down into four different things and just at the surface level when it comes to hospitality, these are four things that I think all of us can do as Christian people trying to exercise hospitality with others.

These are things that I hope our hospitality team does when people come over to our house here at Broadview Baptist church. I hope that they will be people who are intentional, meaning they run, they're the first to say hello. And you know, sometimes in church world we can sit around waiting for somebody else to say hello to us, especially those introverts in us. Among us. But Abraham was taking the initiative. He was intentional going out to him. There was a humility of heart in Abraham in that he bowed down before those three people.

I think humility when it comes to human relationships, humility is like oil in the engine. You can have relationships without humility, it's just they don't work very good. I need a little bit of oil in the in the gears, and that's what humility does He was also inviting. He was eager. He was begging them, please come, please come over. There's something about when you're extending hospitality to someone, if you just refuse to take no for an answer, eventually they're going to cave and give in that's the way my granddad used to do when I'd come over.

You hungry? No, I'm not hungry. Well I got something in the fridge. I'm really not hungry. It's okay. No, I just cooked up this chili and then he'd go on and on about the chili and just

on and on and on until finally I said, okay fine, I'll have a bowl of chili. He that's what Abraham was, just insisting. Come on, come on, come on. This is why. This is why you're here. Let me help take care of your needs. And then the fourth thing is he was helpful. He was helpful in meeting their physical needs.

Now, those four things are great for hospitality. These are things that I think our church should do. We should be intentional going out, welcoming people. When people walk in the doors, be the first to say hello be excited, be inviting, inviting them over, try to be helpful, meeting their needs, whatever they may be, whether they're looking for directions, looking for a bathroom, or looking for a small group. But I don't think the text is about exercising hospitality with strangers, first and foremost. This is a visit not from strangers. This is a visit from the Lord.

And this is really, when you think about it, a template for how to foster tangible encounters with the living God, which is one of our core values. In our church that we talked about in the month of January, that we foster tangible encounters with the living God, that we as a church want to create environments where people can not just learn about God intellectually, but they can actually experience and commune with God personally and relationally because one moment in the presence of God, the living God, can change your life. And these things, just from my own life experience, I know are important when it comes to creating an environment in your life where the Lord can visit.

And you do have you have to be intentional. You have to be someone who when the opportunity arises you run to the opportunity I think some of us are just kind of laissez-offer, casual in our approach. If God wants to speak to me, he'll just knock me upside the head when he's ready for me to listen. That you're robbing yourself some so many opportunities to experience and commune with the Lord. There's got to be intentionality. You got to get up in the morning, you know, you've got to spend time in the word.

You've got to sacrifice some of your preferences so that you can run to him instead of just waiting for him to run to you. He also I think humility when it comes before the Lord. This is why the Beatitudes are so helpful and when you think about your prayer life and how to commune with God It begins with a humility of heart, a blessed are the poor in spirit. They are the ones that have the kingdom of heaven, those who mourn over their sin. You can't be a proud person if you're mourning over your own brokenness before the Lord.

Those who are meek, who have surrendered themselves, they've emptied themselves of themselves so that they might be filled with the fullness of God. That's how you create an environment so that you can receive what it is that God wants to give, namely his presence in your life. It comes to those who are humble, it comes to those who are intentional, it comes to those who are eager. Or inviting those who ask the Lord to come, those who say, Lord, would you visit us this morning? Certainly the Lord can do whatever he wants to do.

But the Bible says some of us don't have because we don't ask. And when we do ask, we ask of the wrong motives. When's the last time you asked the Lord? Would you just come and visit? Would you commune with me? Would you would you visit our church? Would you visit my family? Would you come and fill this place with your presence? There's something about asking that the Lord says, well, of course I will sure, I'd love to. But you've got to knock and keep on knocking. Ask and keep on asking.

Search and keep on searching. And then finally, we got to be helpful. Now when I say helpful serving the Lord, this is reminds me of Romans chapter 12, verse 1, where it says, don't He says to offer your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to the Lord. And then the last part of that verse says this is your spiritual act of worship, or some say your reasonable act of service. The Greek word worship is really a word used throughout the Old Testament to talk about service in the church.

The temple priest would serve the Lord. In the temple by tending to certain things that needed tending to, by preparing the offering, making the sacrifice, interceding for the people. It wasn't just warm feelings and kind of being ministered to by the Lord in worship, especially in the Old Testament, they were serving the Lord, they were ministering to the Lord, they were blessing the Lord. And that's what Abraham's doing in this encounter with the Lord. He's tending to his needs, not because the Lord has any needs. And we don't serve the Lord because he needs our service.

We serve the Lord because he is worthy. Of everything that we have to give. We serve the Lord because he has an agenda. In this case, he was going to Sodom and Gomorrah to execute judgment, and Abraham's basically saying, on your way, Lord. Let me help you. Let me let me do everything in my power so that the kingdom of God can come and the will of God can be done on earth as it is in heaven. And that's how we can experience the living God in our life is by orienting ourselves around his agenda, his kingdom, and surrendering our preferences and yielding control so that those needs about his kingdom are met.

When these four things are in place in your life, I think you'll create an environment where God can come over. And God will visit you, and your life will be changed as a result. When these four things are present, I think we create a climate in our church where the Lord can come over. He can manifest his presence in ways that are beyond the typical. God is obviously always present. He's here even now. His word is being preached. He's convicting hearts through the Holy Spirit. But there can be times where the Lord manifests his presence in a in a special way, an intimate way, a way of communion and intimacy and oneness.

That is worthy of our attention and worthy of our pursuit just as it was for Abraham. Second thing you see with Abraham's ready heart is he gives his best to the Lord. So after they come over, they come into the house. It says in verse 6 that Abraham hurried into the tent, and then he said to Sarah, quick, need three measures. Some of your translations say sayas. Of

fine flour and make bread. And then Abraham ran to the herd and got a tender choice calf. He gave it to a young man who he hurried to prepare it.

And then Abraham took curds and milk as well as the calf that he had prepared, and he set them before the men, and he served them as they ate under the tree. Notice the urgency language over and over and over again. Abraham is preparing a table for the Lord to feast in his house, and he is giving the very best that he has to offer. He gives a choice young calf. You pick a young calf because they're tender, you know, the steak is tender, it's not rough old flesh like some cows have, or that nasty dated steak that you can buy if you're on clearance.

No, this was the *pr creme de la creme*. This was the best of the best. He takes these three measures of flour. If you do a little word study, that's the word *say* is. I think it was about seven to ten. Quarts so if you put all that together you're looking at I don't know thirty twenty-one to thirty quarts of flour. That would have made a lot of bread. You guys ever go to Panera Bread and you see the little all the bread and the little thing? This is like three Panera breads worth of bread.

This is 40 loaves of bread or something like that. And it's of the finest flour. Okay? The point is Abraham's giving his very best. Now Abraham was a wealthy man. So he could you know, he could have done this, but this is not just he's wealthy and he's giving a normal meal. This is he's extremely wealthy and he's giving the finest meal that he can possibly give to the Lord because the Lord is worthy of our best. And if you want a ready heart, if you if you are heart that is ready to meet with the Lord then you're going to have a heart that's ready to give your best to the Lord.

I think this is a word, especially for our culture, that has become very casual when it comes to our relationship with God and we've kind of trivialized the Lord and watered him down so that he's kind of on our level instead of on his level. But if you think about the Lord in terms of who he really is, he deserves our very best. Not because he needs it, obviously he doesn't need it, and not because he'll be impressed by it, because I don't think that he'll be impressed by our very best.

Our righteousness is a polluted garment, as the Bible says. But we give our very best because he is worthy of the very best that we can give. And it's reflective of a heart that's ready to meet with the Lord. A ready heart gives their best to the Lord just as Abraham does here. A lot of us are giving the Lord our leftovers. Lord if I have any leftover time, then I'll give it to you. Lord if I have any leftover money at the end of the month it's yours, but you know, here lately with all this inflation, nobody's got any extra money for the Lord.

Lord, if I have any other leftover energy after I've taken care of all my kids and done all my duties around the house You know, then maybe we can spend some time together. The Lord is not worthy of your leftovers. The Lord is worthy of the first. He's worthy of the best.

Psalms ch Proverbs chapter 3 verses 9 and 10. Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce. Then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats bursting with wine. Don't give the Lord your leftovers.

When you give the Lord your leftovers, it's exposing a spiritual blindness in your life that you don't really see who He really is, and that you are not ready to receive the very best that he desires to give. And that's what Abraham was able to receive from the Lord. He received from the Lord the thing that he had been longing for all of these years because his heart was positioned to receive that from the Lord. And that's the next thing we see in verses nine and following. He says, Where's your wife Sarah?

And then he says he's she's over there in the tent. And the Lord said, I will certainly come back to you in about a year's time and your wife Sarah will have a son. Now look at this. Now Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent behind him. Oh I'm yeah okay yeah Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent behind him and Abraham and Sarah were old and getting on in years. Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. So if you're new to our study in the book of Genesis, you're not clued in on this, but Sarah I was a old old woman and she'd been trying for the vast majority of her life to have a baby but unsuccessful.

And in that barrenness in this day and age is a heavy burden that many women carry unwillingly and wish that they could have children. But in the ancient near East to not have a child was really a death sentence in some way, and that you couldn't have anyone to put food on your table or take care of your needs or carry on your family line. Thankfully the Lord blessed Abraham with incredible wealth so that this wasn't a liability, but it was a source of pain for Sarah because the Lord had promised Abraham, I'm going to bless you.

And give you descendants that are as numerous as the stars in the sky, and yet Sarah feels as his wife, I'm not able to give what the Lord promised my husband. And so now here comes these three servants. I don't know that Sarah knew that this is the Lord speaking. She's just listening in on a bunch of old men talking about her talking about her womb and her making babies and all this stuff. And I wonder what she thought to herself. You know, these guys. And so she laughs in verse 12.

She laughs to herself. Now is she in there with the guys, yes or no? No, she's outside the tent, she's listening in, and she hears all this stuff about her having a baby, and so she laughs. After I'm worn out and my Lord is old, and then I'm going to have delight. And then the Lord asked Abraham, why did Sarah laugh, saying, can I really have a baby when I'm old. So the Lord knows Sarah's laughing, even though Sarah's not in the room. This is just the Lord, I think, revealing the fact this is not some normal guest here.

This is the Lord speaking. And then he reminds Abraham and Sarah who's listening in, is anything impossible for the Lord? Answer, no. Nothing is impossible for the Lord, and at the

appointed time I will come back to you, and in about a year she will have a son. And Sarah denied it. I didn't laugh. She said this because she was afraid. But then the Lord replied, no, you did laugh. So Sarah is listening and she hears this incredible news, the news she'd been waiting for her whole life. She's going to receive the best from the Lord.

She's finally going to see this promise fulfilled, and her immediate reaction is laughter. Why does she laugh? I think she laughs because the weight. She had been waiting so long. I think she'd given up hope. She's like, maybe the Lord's going to answer the prayer in one of those ways, you know. God always gets the win and we just kind of resign and accept he's going to do what he's going to do and I'll just accept it. But now the Lord is saying no. It's going to be answered in a miraculous way.

It's going to be answered in a spectacular way. And when Sarah is met with this hesitation and this unbelief, the Lord reminds her of two things. Number one, I am able. There is power to do what you cannot do. There is supernatural power that I have at my disposal that you don't have, and I'm going to bring it to bear. And number two, I've promised it. So the promises of God and the power of God are the reminders that Sarah needed to have a boldness of faith. And one of the things that's characteristic of a ready heart.

When God comes over, is there is a boldness of faith to do what God has called you to do. If you're going to be a heart marked by readiness, you've got to be a heart filled with courage. And boldness and courage and boldness don't come from you. They can't come from you. Courage and boldness come from outside of you, namely the power of God and the promises of God. In your life. And I think this is a word for our church in particular. I sense the Lord wanting to do new things in our church, exciting things in our church.

I think our culture now is more confused than it's ever been. I think people are hurting worse today than they've hurt in years and years and years. I think there is a hunger for the things of God in our culture now in ways that it has not been present before because secularism and godless ideologies are the chickens are coming home to roost, if you want to put it in that way. The promises that that secularism and humanism said they were going to deliver, people are realizing it's not delivering on those promises.

There's got to be something more to life. And it's an opportunity for our church and churches like our church to see many, many, many, many people come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. It's an opportunity for our church to see brokenness and families and mental health and all the stuff that we see around us. It's an opportunity for us to see God's power come to bear on those things and bring life out of death and Peace out of anxiety and wholeness out of brokenness. But that will not happen if we don't have a boldness of faith to believe God for it and courage to actually step out in faith and do what He's asking us to do.

Ready hearts are marked by boldness of faith. And the question is, are we going to have a faith that is bold enough to trust the Lord when he says, I'm ready to move? Are we going to have a faith that is ready? Characterize readiness by asking the Lord, will you do this thing I know you're wanting to do? Will you come and visit as I know you're wanting to come and visit? Sarah laughed. What are you laughing at today? What in your life have you just kind of hesitated? I guess God's not going to do that.

I guess they're not going to get saved. I guess this isn't going to happen in my life. If it is something that the Lord has promised you. And He has promised to build His church, right? He has promised us that. He has promised. That the nations will one day gather around the throne of God and sing, worthy is the Lamb who was slain. He has promised us that vision. If he has promised us that and he has the power to bring it about, all authority in heaven on earth has been given to Jesus.

I will be with you always, even to the end of the age. If those things are true, he has all of the power and he has promised to be with us, then why would we hesitate on that front? Why would we hesitate on believing him to do something amazing in our midst, something new in our day? And why have you given up believing on the thing that God has promised you. Ready hearts find courage and boldness. Maybe they find new life in the power and promises of the Lord. And that's ultimately what Sarah receives from Jesus as he reminds her again I will do this.

Nothing is impossible with the Lord. After they have that interaction, it says that Jesus and these two angels get up and they move to where they were ultimately going to head, which is Sodom and Gomorrah. Verse 16 says, when the men got up from there and they looked out over Sodom, Abraham was walking with them to see them off. And then the Lord said, should I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do? Abraham is to become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth be blessed through him, because I've chosen him so that he will command his children and his house after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.

This is how the Lord will fulfill to Abraham what he promised him. Then the Lord said, the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is immense in their sin. Is extremely serious. I'm going to go down and see if what they have done justifies the cry that has come out to me, and if not, I will find out. So the men turned from there and went towards Sodom, and Abraham remained standing before the Lord This last thing that you see about Abraham's readiness of heart is that ready hearts are chosen by God to be a blessing.

We're blessed to be a blessing. We're chosen by God so that we might be used by the Lord. God chose you so that he might use you, just like he's going to use Abraham. And you cannot be someone who has a readiness to meet with the Lord but not also simultaneously have a readiness to be used by the Lord. Because God doesn't just meet with us to bless us, He

meets with us to bless us so that we might bless others with the blessing that we've received. From the Lord. And that's exactly what the Lord is saying to Abraham.

He's saying, why would I hide this from him? He asked it, should I hide this from Abraham? I don't think it's a real question. I think it's a rhetorical question. Why would I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do to Sodom? Abraham's my covenant mediator. Abraham's my man. Abraham's the light that's going to be a light to the nations. He's the mediator who's going to help reconcile lost people to God. If that's his purpose and he's going to accomplish that purpose in his family and the generations after him, why would I not also expose him to the reality of what happens outside of that covenant relationship?

Why would I not expose him to where he would be were it not for the saving grace of the Lord? Why would I not show him what sin and the consequences of sin and unbelief ultimately invite on those who persist in them? Of course I would show him. And Abraham, I want you to see this so that you can respond appropriately in light of what it is and so we're chosen by God to be used by God, and one of the ways that God uses us when we are chosen by him.

When you when you put your faith in Jesus and you surrender your life to him so that you won't go to hell, but you go to heaven when you die. The only reason you're still left on earth, I think, the one thing you can't do in heaven, in other words is to share the news of the gospel with people who need to hear it. You can't do that in heaven because everybody's, you know, already signed up. But there's a lot of people down here who haven't signed up, so the Lord leaves us here so that we might be about that business.

And that's what he's going to impress upon Abraham, and that's exactly what Abraham does. And so he's standing before the Lord, verse 22 says, they go towards Sodom. Abraham standing before the Lord. Then verse 23 says that he steps forward and he says, will you really sweep away the righteous for the wicked? What if there are 50 righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away instead of sparing the place for the sake of 50 righteous people who are in it? You could not possibly do such a thing to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike.

You could not possibly do that. Won't the judge of the whole earth do what is just? Now when it says that he stepped forward, he's not saying geographically. Literally he stepped closer to the Lord. It's a change in disposition, is really what it's describing. He's Abraham's taking on the role of an intercessor, a mediator, someone who think of a lawyer standing in front of a judge it's something that would have required a great deal of courage and boldness. And Abraham, I think, is wrapped up in this decision because his nephew Lot, who he loves, is in Sodom and Gomorrah.

And so he's saying, I, you know, I get there sinful. I get there bad. But lots down there. You're really going to wipe away an entire city of wickedness, even though there's a certain number of people in that city who are righteous? You can't do that. You're the Lord. You're good. You're just. You're merciful. You're kind. The God I know who rescued me out of my idolatry and unbelief and has set me on a new path would never do that. Which is a bold thing to say before the Lord.

And then he starts to argue with the Lord. What if there's 50 righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away instead of sparing the place for the sake of fifty righteous people who are in it? You couldn't possibly do such a thing to kill the righteous with the wicked. Then the Lord said, verse 26, if I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake. To which Abraham, I'm sure, patted himself on the back and said, Whew But then Jesus and the angels keep walking.

Oh no, they're still walking. So Abraham answered, since I've ventured to speak to my Lord, even though I am dust and ashes, and suppose the fifty righteous lack five. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five? In other words, what if there's forty-five, not fifty? And the Lord replied, I won't destroy it if I find forty-five there. And Jesus and the angels keep walking. Then he spoke to him again. Suppose 40 are found there. He answered, I will not do it on account of forty. Then he said, don't be angry.

Let me speak a little further. Suppose thirty are found there. And he answered, I will not do it if I find thirty there. And then he said, since I have already got myself in all this trouble, speak to my Lord one more time, suppose twenty are found there. He replied, I will not destroy it on account of twenty. And then he said, let not my Lord be angry, and I will speak one more time, because Jesus is still walking to Sodom and Gomorrah. Suppose ten are found there. And he answered, I will not destroy it on account of ten.

And then the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, and he departed to Abraham and returned to his place. So he gets all the way down to ten, and the Lord's still going to Sodom and Gomorrah. And I think what Abraham realizes is that there isn't anybody righteous. But he has this impulse to plead with the Lord to spare Sodom and Gomorrah. So this we don't have time to unpack all this, but really Abraham in this moment is acting as a type of Christ. He's pointing to the ministry of Jesus Christ, who is our great high priest, and he's our intercessor, and he's the one who pleads before the Lord on our behalf, even though we are not righteous.

But Abraham's looking for a righteous man where it cannot be found. There is no righteous man in Sodom and Gomorrah, just like there is no righteous man in Abilene, Texas, there are none righteous. No, not one. Abraham's looking for a man of righteousness, and the only man of righteousness going to Sodom and Gomorrah isn't in Sodom and Gomorrah, it's the Lord Jesus Christ who's coming to judge Sodom and Gomorrah. And so in a way this prayer

is pointing us to the need for righteousness that we do not have, that only Jesus Christ can give, but it's also pointing us to that intercessory work of Jesus Christ as the righteous who makes atonement for our sins and pleas before us before the throne of God.

He makes intercession for us, even as he makes atonement for our sin. And so the way I want us to close our service as we prepare to take the Lord's Supper is to ourselves become like Abraham in that we intercede for our Sodom and Gomorrah. We intercede for our city that is not righteous and needs the righteousness of Jesus Christ. One of the ways that we serve the Lord is through redemptive intercession. And redemptive intercession is praying for the salvation of people who do not yet have it who do not possess salvation.

And there are people in your life, hopefully that you know, who do not know the Lord. And one of the things that the Lord invites us to do, because He has chosen us to use us, one of the ways that He will use you is by you getting on your knees before a holy God and pleading with him to reconcile the lost. Lord, would you save these people? And so we're going to do that. In our response time and I want to invite you I know a lot of people don't like to come to the altar anymore but I think there's something powerful about getting up out of your seat and moving your body, just like Abraham was standing before the Lord, but then he stepped near the Lord.

I think there's something about moving and saying, Lord I'm serious. I really want to see this. I need to see this person reconciled to God. And I've already, you know, maybe you've blown your chance and maybe they're not listening to you anymore, but you'd say. Would you bring someone, would you do something to bring them to the Lord? And so I'm going to invite us to pray for those people at the conclusion of our service. And here's the four things I want to encourage you to do as you pray. Redemptive intercession based on Abraham.

Number one, ask for Jesus' sake. It's not for their sake. They're not righteous. I'm not righteous. Jesus is the righteous and he died for those people. Those are his inheritance. So in the name of Jesus, for the sake of Jesus, would you bring them to yourself? It's his inheritance. Ask and I'll give the nations to you. The nations have been given to Jesus Christ. It's that Glorious vision in Revelation 7. People from every tribe, tongue, and nation, they belong to the Lord. They are his to redeem. Lord, would you redeem them?

Ask in Jesus' name. Ask for the whole city. We're going to pray for revival in the entirety of our city. Lord, if you don't bring revival to Broadview, bring revival to some other church in Abilene and bring the lost to saving faith in Jesus Christ in our city. We need a movement in our city. Ask bigly, that's a made-up word, but pray big prayers. Nothing is impossible with God He will do it. He has promised to do. I will redeem my people. I will save my church. So pray big prayers and pray persistently.

Don't stop. If you've been praying for someone and you quit because it wasn't happening on your timetable, the Lord may be doing something in your life during this waiting season and he may be doing something in their life in the waiting season, but the only way for you to receive what the Lord wants to give is to stay ready and the only way to stay ready is to stay persistent and to not stop praying. So as we prepare to take the Lord's table, I want to invite you to join me in praying.

I'm going to come and actually I'm not. I'm going to ask some of our Taylor if you'll come and be available for people to pray. And if any of our other deacons want to come and just stand here at the front to pray with people. If you want to pray individually for someone in your life that doesn't know the Lord, you can come and pray with these people. If you want to pray for our church with one of our church leaders you can do that. Is there any other just a handful of deacons, maybe two more here and here.

I see that hand. That's not yeah. How about yeah, Bobby and Russell Sorry, I'm putting you guys on the spot. And James. So if you want to come and pray with these men for our city, these are guys who want to see the lost saved. Would you come and pray with them? You may just want to bow your knees right there where you're seated on your chair. You may want to come and make use of this front row that only a few people are sitting on and bow before the Lord and intercede for the lost.

But let's do that as the Lord presses upon us his desire to do something great to hearts that are ready to receive it. So would you pray, Lord, would we have a ready heart to see you move in this way. Heavenly Father, as we enter into this time of invitation and we, like Abraham, step forward and ask for you to do something great in our city and in the lives of the people that we love who do not know you. Would you use this time to renew us in our faith, to reawaken a fresh vision of what could be and what should be, especially Lord, as we march towards Easter Sunday and Palm Sunday, in a season in our culture where people are more open to the things of God And in this year, more hungry for the reality of what God can do in their life, would you help us to be ready, equipped? eager, expectant to join you in that redemptive work that you're trying to accomplish.

Lord, we give you this time. We pray that this invitation would be used by your Holy Spirit to work in our hearts in a way that positions us to be used by you in the coming weeks and months. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.