

## Scripture Reading: Genesis 18

“9 Then they said to [Abraham], "Where is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent."  
10 And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"  
13 And Jehovah said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for Jehovah? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." 15 But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!" 16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. 17 And Jehovah said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, 18 since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice, that Jehovah may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." 20 And Jehovah said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know." 22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before Jehovah.”

# "Abraham the Friend of God"

It is a New Year and we are back into our study of Genesis: The Book of Beginnings!

We are in the midst of a very long section of this important book that outlines the giving of a son of promise to faithful Abraham. It runs from the promise given in chapter twelve until we see the birth of Isaac in chapter 21.

- Here in chapter 18 we have Abraham’s incredible visit from the Lord and two of His angels!

We have considered the hospitality of Abraham and the doubts and faith of Sarah who foreshadows Mary as the mother of Jesus! Later this month as we come to our remembrance of the horrific sin of abortion in our land with imprecatory Psalms and prayers lifted up against the evil doers of our nation, we will be considering the major purpose of this visit:

- The judgment and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah!

But first we need to consider the insights that this visit gives us about God’s relationship with Abraham and Abraham’s interactions with God:

- Both of which will give us great instruction and comfort for our lives as disciples of Jesus!

There is much talk in Christendom today about Jesus being our friend and Lord willing this week and next we will obtain a much better understanding of what that truly means and the implications of it in your lives. This week we will consider what it means for Abraham to be the friend of God and next week, Lord willing, we will consider the incredible discussion that Abraham has with God Almighty about the coming judgment.

I am spending some extended time on these not only because they are easy places to see Jesus, which has been our goal here in Genesis, but also because the applications are so important and can be so rich for our lives today.

As we saw a few weeks ago, Abraham has greeting these three men as traveling strangers and given them the kind of hospitality that was expected of God's people. Most believe that when the Angel of the Lord asks, "'Where is Sarah your wife?," Abraham begins to understand in whose presence he has been.

- They knew Sarah's name and then go on to reiterate the promise given during the Lord's last visit, this time including Sarah.

After the Lord assures them that the promised son will come from Sarah and gently rebukes Sarah for her doubts we read this in verse 16: "Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way."

The Lord and His angels have a task to carry out and Abraham continues to be a good host by sending them on their way and traveling with them for a bit as was the custom of that day. It is then that we see another glimpse into the mind of God as He ponders what to share with Abraham:

17 "And Jehovah said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,..."

- Now the Lord goes on to explain why He should include Abraham in this matter, but first I want us to fully take in what is being said here...

I mentioned that having Jesus as our friend is popular today and sadly often abused with Jesus being more like a buddy than the type of friend the Bible reveals Him to be to us. To learn what the Bible says about this let us first turn to the Epistle of James where we read at: 2:23 "And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God."

Jesus also calls His disciples friends as we see in John's account of His long discourse after the Lord Supper... John 15: "9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. 12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, & that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. 17 These things I command you, that you love one another. 18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

I trust you can see the depth of the friendship that Jesus speaks of and the similarity to what we see here in Genesis chapter eighteen!

- Jesus calls us friends because He chose us, not because we invited Him into our club or social circle!
- Jesus is our true friend because He has revealed the love of the Father to us and His work on our behalf!
- Jesus is our friend because He will stand with us against His and our enemies in the world!

If this were a sermon on John 15 those would be my three important points about friendship with Jesus but for this morning we are going to focus on how God speaks to us as His friends...

First we find words very similar to those of Jesus to His disciples in Psalm 25: “8 Good and upright is Jehovah; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way. 9 The humble He guides in justice, And the humble He teaches His way. 10 All the paths of Jehovah are mercy and truth, To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. 11 For Your name's sake, O Jehovah, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great. 12 Who is the man that fears Jehovah? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses. 13 He himself shall dwell in prosperity, And his descendants shall inherit the earth. 14 The secret of Jehovah is with those who fear Him, And He will show them His covenant. 15 My eyes are ever toward Jehovah, For He shall pluck my feet out of the net.”

Today we do not have angelic visits or prophets & Psalmists giving new revelations nor do we get to walk the earth with Jesus as those disciples did for over three years...

- But He speaks with us as His friends none the less!

Turning back to the New Testament we can look at a very familiar passage about the importance of God's Word in Peter's final letter where we see clearly how God speaks with us as His friends today:

II Peter 1: “17 For [Jesus] received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

- So with all of that in mind let us return to the text and see this in its full context:

17 “And Jehovah said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, 18 since Abraham shall surely become a great & mighty nation, & all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice, that Jehovah may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”

- As we saw in the discussion Jesus had with His disciples, Abraham is NOT God's friend because Abraham got to know Him but rather because Abraham was known by God.

God had plans for Abraham and they would be carried out in history by the actions of Abraham and his heirs... It is the same principle that we see the Apostle Paul declaring to the Church at Ephesus: “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Just as it should amaze us that the God of the Universe would come sharing His plans with Abraham we should be amazed that Jesus is our friend...

BUT in both cases it is God Almighty who calls us friend and as such He remains our Lord and Savior bidding us to do all He commands... Jesus told the disciples to abide in His love by keeping His commandments, He told them to love one another as He had loved them, He told them to go and bear fruit and again told them to love one another... ALL in the context of telling them that they were His friends.

- Jesus is our friend, but never our buddy or sidekick!

It is the same here with Abraham: Just as Jesus would go on to make great promises to the disciples and send them off with the Great Commission, so Abraham is given tasks to accomplish as God purposes:

“19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice, that Jehovah may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.””

- Abraham was going to obey and that would eventually bring the promised Seed, Jesus, who would save His people from their sins.

We are to obey the ordinary tasks Jesus has given us to do and thus the Great Commission is carried out and the Kingdom of Jesus will fill the earth.

- In each case the obedience must be in faith, day by day, not able to see most results, but knowing that the final results are in the hands of our promise keeping God!

Abraham was to “command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice.”

- This continues down to today with commands and instructions for parents to love their children and children to honor their parents.

Psalms 78 gives us an incredible picture of how this is to work in God’s covenant economy...

“Give ear, O my people, to my law; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, 3 Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of Jehovah, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. 5 For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; 6 That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, 7 That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments; 8 And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God.”

- There we can see God’s wisdom and instruction being passed down through at least four generations!

And we see a severe warning about covenant unfaithfulness as well! When God sent His people into the promised land after delivering them from Egypt, we again see Him stressing the instruction of children in Deuteronomy chapter six:

- Instructions which should guide all of our parenting even today!

Deuteronomy 6: “1 'Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which Jehovah your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 that you may fear Jehovah your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, *[three generations again!]* all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged... 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. *[pretty comprehensive!]* 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates... *[contrast w/ legalism]* 20 'When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God has commanded you?' 21 then you shall say to your son: 'We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and Jehovah brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; 22 and Jehovah showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. 23 Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers.'”

- Just as God promised to Abraham!
- So what does all of this mean for us today?

I trust you can see it as a strong reminder that we must keep the baptismal vows that are made by parents and members of Church of the King to raise our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord!

We are to raise them as disciples of Jesus and to do so we must instruct them about all that this means AND we must demonstrate what being a disciple & friend of Jesus means in our own lives!

- That means knowing that Jesus calls us His friends and understanding all that this means.

We are to love one another as fellow members of His family... We are to love His other friends! Ever try to have a real relationship with someone whose friends you hate or even just treat badly?

- Usually does not work well!

It means getting to truly know Jesus as we would any true friend...

- Jesus is not a Facebook friend that we have never met!

This means spending time with Him in prayer AND it means spending time in His Word and especially in the Gospel accounts of His life because He said IF you have seen Him there in His earthly ministry then you have seen the Father! And finally having Jesus as your true friend will bring great comfort in this life no matter what trials and tribulations we might have to face...

We see this comfort expressed in the midst of trials often in the Psalms: Psalm 57:1 "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, Until these calamities have passed by."

Psalm 91:1 "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of Jehovah, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust." 3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence. 4 He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. 5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, 6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday."

- We see the same comfort in the prophets where we find these familiar words of Christmas & Epiphany...

Isaiah 40 "1 "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" Says your God. 2 "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the Lord's hand Double for all her sins." 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; 5 The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

And of course we have the words of Jesus Himself when He told the people of Capernaum, "27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Perhaps, as is often the case, the hymn writer Joseph Scriven says it best in what was a family favorite of ours in the Stoos home for many years and I will leave you with some of his words...

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grieves to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer. Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior still our refuge – take it to the Lord in prayer. Do thy friends despise forsake thee?

Take it to the Lord in prayer! In his arms he'll take and shield thee; thou wilt find a solace there!

**Communion Meditation: Exodus 12**

"21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb. 22 And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. 23 For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you. 24 And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. 25 It will come to pass when you come to the land which the Lord will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. 26 And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' 27 that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.'"