

March 24, 2024  
Palm Sunday  
Pastor Matt Duerr

### God's Narrative: Intercession

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. As we continue with God's narrative, and in particular looking at Father Abraham, I'd like to remind you that last week we were introduced to Father Abraham and he was given the call to "go." Go to the place where I will show you. But the first thing is go; and Abraham did, and he also was promised, "through you, all nations will be blessed," in messianic prophecy. This is how all nations are blessed, and that Jesus the Messiah, draws all people to Himself, Jew and Gentile.

Today we continue with Abraham and Abraham's guess, which we find in our scripture reading this morning in Genesis 18, the Lord and two angels appeared to Abraham. We read that quote. "Three men were standing in front of him." He was sitting at the entrance to his tent. It was the heat of the day. It was the time for the siesta, shall we say a time of resting. It's too hot to be working outside. And here's these three men standing in front of his tent. And somehow, we don't know how exactly, but somehow he recognized that it was the Lord. We read, "He ran to them and said, quote "oh Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant." But Abraham didn't stop there. He took action; action that showed great respect. An action that showed great hospitality. He said, 'let water be brought so that You may wash your feet,' which was a custom at that time. Again, great hospitality here. He says, 'Rest yourselves. Let me prepare a meal for you. Let's eat together. And then when you're refreshed. You can continue on with whatever you were here for.' And it's at that time that God says to Abraham. "Abraham, I will surely return about this time next year, And Sarah, your wife will have a son."

Now this would seem impossible because at this point in time, Abraham's pushing 90 years old and Sarah's not too far behind. We read that Sarah had overheard what the Lord said, and she laughed to herself because she felt both she and Abraham were too old. But the Lord noted that she laughed. And He asked Abraham, 'why did Sarah laugh?' Sarah denied that she did, but the

Lord knew. And the Lord's point was this. And I quote, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" And of course, the answer is no. The Lord can speak and bring the universe into existence. Having a couple of older individuals have children past child rearing age, He can certainly do that too.

But then God continued on, and I want you to listen carefully to this dialogue. He says to Abraham, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Seeing that Abraham will surely become a great nation. It's going back to his promise to Abraham, saying that all nations will be blessed through him. Seeing that; now here, really listen carefully, seeing that I chose him that he may command... I have to stop there for a moment. That Abraham might command, not ask, but command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.

Fathers, take note what the Lord expected of Abraham as a father, and expects of us as fathers. We don't ask our children to believe. We tell them this is what we do. We believe this because. God is truth. And you, children, are to keep the way of the Lord by doing that which is right and just. And we're going to see those two terms really coming to play here, righteousness and justice.

But back to the Lord; "shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" Abraham the one who I've made these promises to, and Abraham the one who is going to do this with his children. What was the Lord going to do? We continue to read; "because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave. I will go down to see if it is bad as I see it?" But it's more than that. It's really putting Abraham in a position of, 'What will Abraham do?' 'Will he do what is righteous and just? And we see that Abraham intercedes on behalf of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. He stepped in between God and them. And he asks the Lord, what if there are 50 righteous in the city? Then he says to the Lord, 'Far be it from You to do such a thing; to put the righteous to death with the wicked so that the righteous fair as the wicked. Far be it from You.' So he starts with "far be it from You." He ends with, "far be it from You." That's repetition in the Hebrew language that puts this whole thing in an exclamation. Please, Lord. Are you going to destroy the righteous with the wicked? Far be it from You!" That's wrong! He continues, "shall not the judge of the earth do what is just?" And the Lord comes back and says, "For 50 I will spare it." Abraham continues. Again, notice how he

approaches God here, out of respect. I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. I who am but dust and ashes. He's acknowledging before the Lord, 'I have no business being here in front of you and talking to you.' But he feels a just and righteous cause. "What if, suppose there are only 45 righteous?" "For the sake of 45, I will save." Oh Lord, what about 40? I'll save. Oh Lord, what about 30? I'll relent, I'll save. Oh Lord, what about 20? For the sake of 20, I will relent. Oh Lord, for the sake of 10? For the sake of 10, I will not judge them. And we read, and the Lord went His way.

No, I'm not going to go into a great big description of everything that happened in Sodom and Gomorrah. I think we all pretty well know the account. If not, please read Genesis 18 and 19. But the Lord did go down and there were only four; Lot, his wife, and their two daughters. And so, the angels told them, 'get out of town. Get out of town now because the Lord is going to judge the city. Run to the next town, run to the hills. Whatever you do, don't look back. And they take off running, and fire and brimstone came down from heaven and consumed the city, and they could hear it. And Lot's wife, turned to look and see, ignoring what the Lord had said to not do. And she turned into a pillar of salt. We could look at this and say, what a tremendous lesson in obedience, obey what the Lord says.

We can look at this and we can see that God is a God of justice and judgment. And He's not kidding. When He says He's going to judge the world in the end and He's going to use fire to do it, He's going to do it. He has already done it with Sodom and Gomorrah, He will followed through. But what I want to do, is take that dialogue, the intercession of Abraham and the focus on righteousness and justice, and fast forward to today, Palm Sunday, a day when we celebrate Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the donkey. Jesus fulfilling the prophecy of Zachariah 9 verse nine as we read this morning. Jesus hearing the people proclaim Him as the Messiah, and the people shouting out and singing while waving palm branches, a sign of victory, and putting their coats on the ground, a sign of tremendous respect, lest the feet of even the donkey that He is riding on touch the ground. Crying out, "Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." They were proclaiming Him as the Messiah.

And it was the Pharisees', the religious leaders, that told Jesus, 'tell these people to stop.' Because they didn't believe He was the Messiah. Jesus told them, "If I make them silent, the very stones will cry out in singing." Why? Why did He come? And why turn on the Pharisees? Because they had been taught wrong. They had been taught that the Messiah would be a political king. And as a political king, it was all about them. The king would make them great. They were taught that when God told Abraham that he would be a blessing to all nations, that all nations would have to come to them for trade, it was a message that focused on their pride, that focused on their power, that focused on their prosperity. They would be number one in the world, and everyone would be reliant on them for worldly things.

But Jesus came not for worldly prosperity. Jesus came to fulfill righteousness. He came to do what we can't, which is live a righteous life. He came to live that righteous life and to give to us His white robe of righteousness. He came to do what is just, to intercede on our behalf, step in on our behalf, take our sins on Himself and Himself pay the just price of our sin, which is death. He came to suffer and die in our place. He came to fulfill all righteousness and all justice. By interceding and stepping in and taking all of it on Himself to give all of the benefits to us.

Welcome to holy week! The week set apart for our salvation through Christ's intercession on our behalf. First portrayed by Father Abraham, as he interceded for those despicable people of Sodom and Gomorrah. And a week for us to follow their lead and seek to do what is right and just ourselves. It is a week for us to follow their lead and to intercede for all those who need it. Even our enemies. Even those we think deserve judgment. Even those we don't like. Because when we intercede on their behalf, we're following in the footsteps of Christ Himself and His intercession for us. We follow in the steps of faithful Abraham who interceded because he didn't want to see the people of Sodom and Gamora facing God's wrath. We, likewise, should not want to see anyone face God's wrath.

So, ask yourself who needs your intercession this week? Who needs your prayers for them this week? Who doesn't know Jesus that you want to know the Lord Jesus fervently? Pray for them this week. In our Saviors name, Amen.