

Genesis

Embarrassing Ancestors and Our Glorious Hope

Genesis is all about God making an extravagantly gorgeous Creation to declare His glory and the horrifying result of our ancestors' rebellion against His kingly rule. It was written to remind us of our good God's promise to undo all the terror that our treason has wrought. It shows us our ancestors' faltering walk of faith and His faithful care for them, all the while paving the way for the coming King who would deliver us from ourselves and all who oppose our good God. The New Heavens and Earth will perfectly declare His praise.

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

Please ask the Holy Spirit to guide you:

Grieve! Be honest about all that's wrong in this world.

Cast it all on Jesus! Run to Him with all that wounds us.

First Thessalonians 4:13-18

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

The Life of Faith—Hebrews

Rooted in God's Promises & Running to New Jerusalem

The book of Hebrews was written to encourage and exhort God's people who were tempted to turn back from the gospel. They were reminded that the promise of salvation comes through the Son who reveals His Father's glory and provides Sabbath rest. This is the basis for the Christian hope as we await the New Jerusalem whose architect has secured our resurrection life in the eternal city of peace.

Sermon Notes and Daily Devotional
First Congregational Church of Woodstock

Pastor Doug Warren
May 12th, 2019

Morning Service:

Genesis 23: 1 – 20

Grief and Loss in God's Kingdom

1. Abraham Mourns the Loss of His Wife, Sarah.
2. Her Funeral Arrangements Demonstrate Tension.
3. Already Raised in Christ, We Still Experience Death.

Everybody dies. That's just the way it is. But it is not supposed to be. This reality stands out in stark contrast in the death of Sarah right on the heels of God's deliverance of Isaac through Abraham's faith in the resurrection. God is the God of the living so why are His people dying? That tension grows rather than diminishes with the resurrection of Jesus. He has died so that we don't have to die. Yet we still do. What's going on? Only the grace of God answers this vexing cry.

Evening Service:

Hebrews 3: 7 – 19

Belief and the Promised Rest

1. We Are Called to Keep Believing God's Promises.
2. There Is a Community Nature to Our Faith in Christ.
3. We Must Be Vigilant in Guarding Our Hearts.

True faith leads to obedience. God promises His people Sabbath rest in Christ and community together. Longing for that rest should motivate us to fiercely guard our hearts in Christ.

Taking Gathered Worship Home

What do you do with grief? Sometimes we have the wrong notion that as Christians we are not supposed to grieve, but that's not what the Bible actually teaches. It does say we are not supposed to grieve as the world does. But what's the difference?

Please use the devotional material below each day this week to meet with Jesus. Ask Christ to teach us His ways that we may walk in them to accomplish His purposes.

Sunday AM

READ **Genesis 23:1-20**. DISCUSS, How do you reconcile God's promises with the current horrors in our fallen world? PRAY for God to teach us the fullness of His promises and how they have been secured by Christ.

Sunday PM

READ today's passage: **Hebrews 3:7-19**. DISCUSS, What does it mean to fix our eyes on Christ? How do we do this? PRAISE Christ for being so uniquely qualified as our Savior.

Monday

READ **Genesis 23:1-20**. DISCUSS, Why do we still experience death since Christ has already come and been raised from death? PRAY for God to teach us how to grieve as His beloved children in Christ. EXTEND His grace to someone today. Show them the grace Christ has lavished upon you. PRAY for the Lord to comfort us in our sorrows.

Tuesday

READ **Genesis 22:1-19; First Thessalonians 4:13-18** (on back). DISCUSS, What does it mean to grieve as those without hope? How is our grief to be different? How does the gospel free us to truly grieve? PRAY, "Father God, we give You honor, praise, and glory. Jesus, we thank You for Your complete work in saving us. Holy Spirit, empower us to live out this faith and embolden us to proclaim Christ!"

"These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city."

Wednesday

READ **Genesis 23:1-2; Hebrews 11:13-16** (above). DISCUSS, How do you reconcile God's promises and life's current horrors? PRAY, ask God to radically transform your understanding of His promises so that no one could mistake the fact that you are trusting in Christ to raise you from the dead.

Thursday

READ **Genesis 23:17-20; First Thessalonians 4:13-18**. CONSIDER God's amazing promises in Christ and His resurrection. PRAY, "Jesus, help us to trust in You and Your faithfulness in fulfilling all Your promises. Teach us to believe what You tell us more than our own eyes."

Friday

READ **Genesis 23:1-20**. How have you been learning from this passage this week? PRAY for your neighbors to come to know our faithful God. Ask the Lord to open their eyes to His goodness and wonder.

Saturday

PREPARE today for the gathered worship service tomorrow. Do what you can today so that you will be less hurried tomorrow. READ **Genesis 24:1-67**. Come to worship tomorrow expecting to hear from God through His Word and to learn more about our God together. Pray for God's glory to be more and more manifested in the Woodstock area. Pray that He will use us to extend His grace as we celebrate it together.