

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- As a kid Michigan, we sometimes camped at Proud Lake. When we were set free in the morning, we would get in our little 2-man yellow, inflatable raft, or later our aluminum rowboat with a 5 HP outboard on it, and go exploring all day long.
- One day, after many days we had spent rowing around the lake, we discovered, hidden by the cattails and aquatic plants a channel on the other side of the lake from the campground. We entered the channel and we rowed and rowed our little yellow raft. To our delight as young adventurers, we eventually broke out into a second lake. We previously had no idea at all that it was there. It had remained hidden from our sight until that day of discovery.
- Having had this wonderful experience we then more carefully searched and searched that 2nd lake and we found an even narrower hidden channel, rowed hard some more hours, and were amazed to find a third lake. Now, of course, knowing what we had been missing before, we searched it diligently and found another nearly invisible channel off of that lake. We traveled its length into a fourth, wonderful, secret lake. I think returning to the campground by daylight, meant we had to stop our discovery work with that 4th lake.
- You can only imagine what a joy it was, as young kids to make these amazing discoveries. Our lack of knowing what to look for had kept us from seeing what was there until we discovered that first channel, nearly by accident. However, after we got a taste for it you couldn't hide the next narrow connecting channel from us. We were experts.
- When I map out God's record of His redemptive plan, I am reminded of both the hiddenness and the joy of discovery of the narrow channels that are the absolute keys to the next bigger portion of his perfect redemptive plan.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- It started narrowly with Adam and Eve and expanded into the great lake of their human family. Then, on the other side of that lake, hidden by all the weeds of sin and death, we suddenly discover a very narrow channel—the channel of Noah and his son Shem.
- Then the lake broadens again as sin takes over most all of humanity again. It might seem to be the end of the lakes when we reach the incident at the Tower of Babel.
- But, ah yes, maybe now we know we should be looking for where that water of redemption connects and still flows out of that mess. Indeed, we do excitedly find it in the narrow channel of Terah and his son Abram. The water of redemption again flows on out of the mess of Lake Babel through another narrow channel.
- If we were to look at the genealogies recorded in the Gospels, we would find God had continued the same pattern. Big lakes of humanity that seemed to be all there was just wasn't all there was. There were always channels flowing out carrying the water of God's redemptive plan until it narrowed into one man Jesus of Nazareth.
- I believe the widening and narrowing goes on from there with the church but then narrows back to the same Jesus of Nazareth when he returns to earth. Jesus is now God's ultimate channel of redemptive water through the human mess as we live life in the wide lake called the lake of the "the last days."
- We call today, **Palm Sunday** to commemorate the palm strewn entrance of the Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem to die and rise to new life.
- We know as he rode into Jerusalem some recognized him as God's conduit of redeeming Life—others weren't expecting such a conduit so they never saw that he was that connecting channel there among the weeds. He remained hidden to them among all the weeds.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- Abram was an earlier, narrowing, connective channel in God's plan of redemption—that flow through human history. So now, from **Genesis** 12 and on, we read rather narrowly focused, specific stories of his life as the conduit of God's redemptive water and then stories of the expansion into the larger lake of Israel as a nation.
- God calls Abraham out of the weedy mess by asking for faith and making some history-spanning, world-changing promises.
- As I mentioned last week, we may tend to think these promises are about Abram receiving a good life for being a man of faith. They are not. They are the promises that allow God's redemptive water to flow on unabated in human history through Abram.
- These promises of **blessing** are not, an end in themselves, but the means of enabling—I should say, more strongly—**EMPOWERING** the water of redemption to flow on through the messy, weedy lake of a sinful world.
- These promises to Abram are the means of God keeping his earlier promise made to Eve as he spoke to the serpent that her very seed—a human—would ultimately crush the head of that serpent that had co-opted the image bearers in his scheme to try to steal God's NAME for himself.
- Let's read the promises of **Genesis** 12 again. **READ Genesis 12:1-3**
- If someone would only have given us a map of Proud Lake and the other attached lakes we would have known in advance where to go to find those narrow connecting channels. But then, where would have been that joy of discovery?
- Abram gets no detailed map from the LORD even though the LORD asks him to **go somewhere** geographically. There is a "**land.**" It is out there in that direction. **However, at this moment, the destination is not nearly as important to the LORD as something else is.**

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- God is not worried. He can get Abram to the right place. That is not the issue here. If it had been—if the outcome were most important, God could have told Terah not to stop at Haran but to take a left and keep going until you hit the big Oak tree in Canaan.
- **The issue is the faith to "leave."** Well, 11:31 says Terah left so this "leaving" must not be simply geographical.
- Abram was told by the LORD to leave his **country**, his **people** and his **"father's household."**
- The NIV says "**country**." If we are not particularly patriotic, we might just miss the point of that word. Abram is to leave "from the *eretz* (in Hebrew) or the **land** of him." As in singing "*This Land Is My Land—This Land is Your Land*"—get it? It's not the dirt or the mapping coordinates that matter. It is the attachment and the way of life that attachment brings. The point is he is to leave his *tribal territory*—his *home country* that he is used to and has grown up in—his here-to-fore place of living--his here-to-for life on the earth as a human.
- He is also to leave his "**peeps**"—his "people." I said "peeps" because I've heard some say, "*Those are my peeps.*" This means those are my **kin**—the people like me with whom I fit. They are my "*kinship group*." I know how to do life with them and them, with me.
- Remember the TV series "**Roots**." It was about the traumatic experience of Africans being ripped from their "roots" and being forced into slavery. It was about a sense of loosing all that gave them their identity. That "root-ripping" is what we are talking about here.
- Then, God said Abram was also to leave his **"father's household."** John Walton points out that for Abram, in that culture, this leaving meant leaving not just a "house" but also, his inheritance, his ownership of family lands, his place in the lineage of the family and

the blessing that was thought to come with that place. Walton concludes this especially meant leaving his father's gods as well.

- So we get it, right? This was not so much about leaving one address for another address. This leaving was about leaving behind a life—leaving behind an identity as the world identifies people.
- That's a big deal, right? It is not an easy thing to do—at least not perfectly—not all at once. That is especially true when you are responsible for other people leaving with you as Abram was.
- But, right up front, the Lord makes it clear that trusting him to give up this life won't leave Abram with no life at all. First, there will be a "land" a home for a new tribe with a new culture and a new sort of life—a new identity.
- Because we have read *Genesis* up to this point, we know God originally prepared a "place"—a garden—a home that was perfect for the purpose he had assigned his human agents for imaging him. We will find out, as we read on in the story of Israel in the OT, that Canaan, where Abram was to go, was now going to be the land "*flowing with milk and honey*"—the perfect "new" place from which Israel could fulfill their created purpose as image bearers.
- Abram will have a new land. And, then look again, Abram will not be lost in this new land—swallowed up by the unfamiliar culture and peoples. Abram will flourish and grow into a "**great nation**"—a great people of his own with the potential for a way of life that fulfilled their commission as image bearers.
- Remember, Moses is writing this to address the Israelites who have come out of Egypt to again "go to Canaan." As relatively isolated slaves, they have become a nation—a people of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in their own right.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- If they can shake off the cobwebs of the Egyptian gods and their ways, this nation will be the image bearers they were meant to be.
- God is not selfish. He is even willing to make Abram have a "great name"—a great reputation in the world. Abram won't be THE NAME. No, that is only the LORD himself. But Abram will have significance, attached to THE NAME as an image bearer of the Creator God.
- And God will be on Abram's side. If people "curse Abram—that is try to bring him low—take away his life and his name, God will deal with them and take away their name—bring them low in life.
- And then, finally, here at least, God promises to make Abram his **conduit of redemption for the whole world**. The "Abram channel" will lead to the lake of all humans. The water of redemption will flow through Abram and his family to the world.
- I worked hard not to mention the word "blessing" until now so that I could make sure we concentrate on what God means by **blessing** rather than what we may think it means.
- If Abram leaves behind his *identity* sourced in the world and gives up the *life* he receives from the world, God will **ble**ss him, Abram will be a source of **ble**ssing himself and all the peoples of the world will **be** channeled blessing through him. Abram will be **blessed himself, a source blessing and a conduit of blessing to all humans**.
- What do we mean when someone sneezes and we say "God bless you?" I'm not sure many people say that any more and I'm not sure I ever understood exactly why we did it although I have heard many explanations. I ask the question simply to make us realize that we may not really understand what the word "*blessing*" means and certainly not in this context.
- I suspect God's blessing might mean to us something like God gives us good stuff or does good stuff for us. Good stuff is often the result

of God's blessing. However, us receiving good stuff is never the focus—never the end—never the point of God's blessing.

- In its purest sense, the point of God's blessing is "**God's gracious empowerment to fulfill God's plan and purpose.**" Here that overarching purpose of being image bearers of the Creator God is precisely what is in view. God is promising to bless Abram with the empowerment to fulfill his imaging purpose in life in a messy world.
- The blessing will empower Abram to become a great nation of image bearers. That's sort of a "nice stuff" for Abram as well, especially since God has asked him to trust and give up his nation he had when connected to the world.
- It's "nice stuff" that God's blessing will end up resulting in Abram also having a great name especially since God asked him to essentially leave his name from the world behind, but a great name as a human is a side effect not the point of God's blessing.
- As God empowers Abram by blessing him it's "nice stuff" that he will make Abram able to bless others and empower them in ways not listed here. We get to see some of those in the stories ahead.
- God is going to bless or empower those who bless or empower Abram in his purpose of being a nation of image bearers. God is going to "de-bless" or push down in failure those who try to "de-bless" or curse Abram in his efforts to fulfill God's purpose.
- Then a big "nice stuff"—God will empower—bless—Abram to be the seed through which **THE SEED** that will bless all peoples will come. We, of course find out this means the Messiah—the King and Savior, the Lord Jesus the Christ will, by God's blessing—by God's empowerment—come through Abram.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- The water of redemption will flow through Abram and his family until it reaches the most crucial narrowing of all human history when Jesus is born, lives, dies and rises again to new life.
- Those who preach a Gospel of worldly prosperity today fall just a bit short of the real point of God's blessings. Abram was blessed **not as an end but as a means to the end of redemption**. The blessing certainly changed Abram's life from his life in Ur. The blessing, would give Abram "nice stuff" such as a beloved son he longed for and it brought him wealth and influence in his world. But, the family and the stuff—the happiness and the success—Abram getting more of the life he wanted in this world was never the point of God's blessing Abram.
- That is an easy truth for believers today to forget. In fact, it is also an easy truth for believers today to reject and many do.
- Many believers today, have drunk deeply from the world's conclusion that, that if **religion** is to be worth anything, it had better give a person happiness and success now. It had better give you the clear answers to experiencing the good life by worldly standards in the here and now or why bother? God had better give people who believe in him and trust him **success** or why bother with the God stuff?
- But again, the end of God's blessing by faith is not that those who trust him get what they want. The end is God's redemptive water flows through them and his purpose is fulfilled in them.
- Don't get me wrong. In the end, those who trust God and participate by receiving his blessing—his empowerment to be his redemptive agents—his channels of living water in this world—will not be cheated out of life by God.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- I can promise you without any doubt that they will not miss out on anything truly good even as they trust God and LEAVE behind **land, people** and **family**—as they walk away from their identity and place they can get from the metrics of success in this world.
- I'm not emotionally certain of very many things these days, but I am absolutely certain of this truth. **We will not lose out when we give up what this world can give us to trust God for what he can give us.**
- How am I so certain? Is it just my own experience? No. Look at what the NT author of Hebrews writes about Abram and this very decision to trust God and leave the world behind. It is in **Hebrews 11:8-10**
- *Hebrews 11:8* **By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**
- By faith—that is by trusting God's Word to him, Abram became a portable, tent-dwelling man instead of a man dwelling in palaces with earthly foundations that he might have been in the world he left behind.
- He gave up on being part of the human building of cities and towers with strong foundations, made from strong, *baked* brick and stuck together with *leakproof* tar to make them at least feel like they would last forever. He gave up on making a lasting name for himself in this world and started living in floppy, thin-walled tent made of goat and camel skin.
- Maybe this contrast was why Moses so carefully gave us the building specifications for the human tower of Babel back in chapter 11.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

Maybe he wanted us to sense the contrast between living in what seemed like a strong brick tower with a foundation tying it securely to the earth versus living in a tent with no earthly foundations that was just lightly pegged to the surface of the earth.

- In my application to us of this faith decision by Abram, I don't wish to trivialize it. This is not Abram deciding where to buy his next tank of gas and bravely trusting God for that decision.
- This is Abram deciding that the buildings and foundations promised by God—even if they remain unseen throughout a whole human life in this world—God's buildings and foundations are what matter. They are true LIFE.
- This is Abram deciding to trust God and leave behind what this world promises as life.
- This is Abram accepting "tent-dwelling" ***now***, for a ***city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God, later.***
- It was this decision of faith that allowed God to *bless* him, to make him a *blessing* and make him a conduit for the waters of redemption to *bless* all human beings.
- It was this major decision of faith to leave behind what this world could give in order to have what God could give.
- So when we pray for God to bless others, or us, are we praying for imposing looking baked-brick and tar-mortared towers now or tents now and a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God someday yet to be seen? What are we leaving and what are we seeking?
- "Good stuff" of life now, is not the point of God blessing Abram or blessing you and me either. I think sometimes we think it is and sometimes we pray for God's blessings with that end in mind rather than the true end of the blessing.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- Are we saying, "God please bless me with the world's stuff of health, prosperity and success that brings us significance now" or praying, "God please bless me with the empowerment to leave this world behind because I have your purpose with a much bigger outcome in mind even though I can't see it in the paradigm this world gives me to measure value."
- Again, I do not wish to trivialize this faith decision of Abram nor do I wish to suggest the man Abram is a perfect example for us to follow because he will not always walk by faith.
- But I cannot ignore the parallels of a pattern for our body—for FBC. For us, there is a much smaller iteration in a fractal pattern depicting leaving behind this world, and its foundations, for some foundationless tent-dwelling and eventually a city of God we cannot yet quite find on the map.
- As we consider what is next for us now that we have sold these "foundations," the pattern and its illustration is not quite what we might immediately think it to be or wish it to be.
- We are not now in the process of figuring out how to quit "tent-dwelling" by locating a new place geographically. We are not looking for our new city of foundations whose architect and maker is God BUT, just located further south--or north--or east--or west.
- No matter where we end up geographically—no matter what our new address might be, we are to live as tent-dwellers who have left this world by faith in God.
- *That faith choice is what God cared about first here with Abram.* Given that faith choice, God could easily show Abram where to go next. More importantly, with that faith choice to leave this world God could "bless Abram"—empower Abram to fulfill his created purpose even in a confused world.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- ***Because of faith in the LORD, God blessed Abram and will bless and empower us to carry out his plan and fulfill our purpose as image bearers. The faith in God to leave this world behind is what matters most not the place we pitch our tent.***
- What does one do each day as a tent-dweller moving around in life trusting God rather than the foundations and towers of the world? What does that life look like for Abram—for you—for FBC? Lord willing, that is for after Easter Sunday and a week's trip to Atlanta.
- However, since we no longer chain the only copy of Scripture to the pulpit here in the church building, you can read ahead in Genesis 12 if this leaves you feeling confused.
- ***Hint:*** It has to do with building *sacrificial altars* rather than heaven reaching-high towers to "touch" God.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- As a kid Michigan, we sometimes camped at Proud Lake. When we were set free in the morning, we would get in our little 2-man yellow, inflatable raft, or later our aluminum rowboat with a 5 HP outboard on it, and go exploring all day long.
- One day, after many days we had spent rowing around the lake, we discovered, hidden by the cattails and aquatic plants a channel on the other side of the lake from the campground. We entered the channel and we rowed and rowed our little yellow raft. To our delight as young adventurers, we eventually broke out into a second lake. We previously had no idea at all that it was there. It had remained hidden from our sight until that day of discovery.
- Having had this wonderful experience we then more carefully searched and searched that 2nd lake and we found an even narrower hidden channel, rowed hard some more hours, and were amazed to find a third lake. Now, of course, knowing what we had been missing before, we searched it diligently and found another nearly invisible channel off of that lake. We traveled its length into a fourth, wonderful, secret lake. I think returning to the campground by daylight, meant we had to stop our discovery work with that 4th lake.
- You can only imagine what a joy it was, as young kids to make these amazing discoveries. Our lack of knowing what to look for had kept us from seeing what was there until we discovered that first channel, nearly by accident. However, after we got a taste for it you couldn't hide the next narrow connecting channel from us. We were experts.
- When I map out God's record of His redemptive plan, I am reminded of both the hiddenness and the joy of discovery of the narrow channels that are the absolute keys to the next bigger portion of his perfect redemptive plan.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- It started narrowly with Adam and Eve and expanded into the great lake of their human family. Then, on the other side of that lake, hidden by all the weeds of sin and death, we suddenly discover a very narrow channel—the channel of Noah and his son Shem.
- Then the lake broadens again as sin takes over most all of humanity again. It might seem to be the end of the lakes when we reach the incident at the Tower of Babel.
- But, ah yes, maybe now we know we should be looking for where that water of redemption connects and still flows out of that mess. Indeed, we do excitedly find it in the narrow channel of Terah and his son Abram. The water of redemption again flows on out of the mess of Lake Babel through another narrow channel.
- If we were to look at the genealogies recorded in the Gospels, we would find God had continued the same pattern. Big lakes of humanity that seemed to be all there was just wasn't all there was. There were always channels flowing out carrying the water of God's redemptive plan until it narrowed into one man Jesus of Nazareth.
- I believe the widening and narrowing goes on from there with the church but then narrows back to the same Jesus of Nazareth when he returns to earth. Jesus is now God's ultimate channel of redemptive water through the human mess as we live life in the wide lake called the lake of the "the last days."
- We call today, **Palm Sunday** to commemorate the palm strewn entrance of the Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem to die and rise to new life.
- We know as he rode into Jerusalem some recognized him as God's conduit of redeeming Life—others weren't expecting such a conduit so they never saw that he was that connecting channel there among the weeds. He remained hidden to them among all the weeds.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- Abram was an earlier, narrowing, connective channel in God's plan of redemption—that flow through human history. So now, from **Genesis** 12 and on, we read rather narrowly focused, specific stories of his life as the conduit of God's redemptive water and then stories of the expansion into the larger lake of Israel as a nation.
- God calls Abraham out of the weedy mess by asking for faith and making some history-spanning, world-changing promises.
- As I mentioned last week, we may tend to think these promises are about Abram receiving a good life for being a man of faith. They are not. They are the promises that allow God's redemptive water to flow on unabated in human history through Abram.
- These promises of **blessing** are not, an end in themselves, but the means of enabling—I should say, more strongly—**EMPOWERING** the water of redemption to flow on through the messy, weedy lake of a sinful world.
- These promises to Abram are the means of God keeping his earlier promise made to Eve as he spoke to the serpent that her very seed—a human—would ultimately crush the head of that serpent that had co-opted the image bearers in his scheme to try to steal God's NAME for himself.
- Let's read the promises of **Genesis** 12 again. **READ Genesis 12:1-3**
- If someone would only have given us a map of Proud Lake and the other attached lakes we would have known in advance where to go to find those narrow connecting channels. But then, where would have been that joy of discovery?
- Abram gets no detailed map from the LORD even though the LORD asks him to **go somewhere** geographically. There is a "**land.**" It is out there in that direction. **However, at this moment, the destination is not nearly as important to the LORD as something else is.**

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- God is not worried. He can get Abram to the right place. That is not the issue here. If it had been—if the outcome were most important, God could have told Terah not to stop at Haran but to take a left and keep going until you hit the big Oak tree in Canaan.
- **The issue is the faith to "leave."** Well, 11:31 says Terah left so this "leaving" must not be simply geographical.
- Abram was told by the LORD to leave his **country**, his **people** and his **"father's household."**
- The NIV says "**country**." If we are not particularly patriotic, we might just miss the point of that word. Abram is to leave "from the *eretz* (in Hebrew) or the **land** of him." As in singing "*This Land Is My Land—This Land is Your Land*"—get it? It's not the dirt or the mapping coordinates that matter. It is the attachment and the way of life that attachment brings. The point is he is to leave his *tribal territory*—his *home country* that he is used to and has grown up in—his here-to-fore place of living--his here-to-for life on the earth as a human.
- He is also to leave his "**peeps**"—his "people." I said "peeps" because I've heard some say, "*Those are my peeps.*" This means those are my **kin**—the people like me with whom I fit. They are my "*kinship group*." I know how to do life with them and them, with me.
- Remember the TV series "**Roots**." It was about the traumatic experience of Africans being ripped from their "roots" and being forced into slavery. It was about a sense of loosing all that gave them their identity. That "root-ripping" is what we are talking about here.
- Then, God said Abram was also to leave his **"father's household."** John Walton points out that for Abram, in that culture, this leaving meant leaving not just a "house" but also, his inheritance, his ownership of family lands, his place in the lineage of the family and

the blessing that was thought to come with that place. Walton concludes this especially meant leaving his father's gods as well.

- So we get it, right? This was not so much about leaving one address for another address. This leaving was about leaving behind a life—leaving behind an identity as the world identifies people.
- That's a big deal, right? It is not an easy thing to do—at least not perfectly—not all at once. That is especially true when you are responsible for other people leaving with you as Abram was.
- But, right up front, the Lord makes it clear that trusting him to give up this life won't leave Abram with no life at all. First, there will be a "land" a home for a new tribe with a new culture and a new sort of life—a new identity.
- Because we have read *Genesis* up to this point, we know God originally prepared a "place"—a garden—a home that was perfect for the purpose he had assigned his human agents for imaging him. We will find out, as we read on in the story of Israel in the OT, that Canaan, where Abram was to go, was now going to be the land "*flowing with milk and honey*"—the perfect "new" place from which Israel could fulfill their created purpose as image bearers.
- Abram will have a new land. And, then look again, Abram will not be lost in this new land—swallowed up by the unfamiliar culture and peoples. Abram will flourish and grow into a "**great nation**"—a great people of his own with the potential for a way of life that fulfilled their commission as image bearers.
- Remember, Moses is writing this to address the Israelites who have come out of Egypt to again "go to Canaan." As relatively isolated slaves, they have become a nation—a people of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in their own right.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- If they can shake off the cobwebs of the Egyptian gods and their ways, this nation will be the image bearers they were meant to be.
- God is not selfish. He is even willing to make Abram have a "great name"—a great reputation in the world. Abram won't be THE NAME. No, that is only the LORD himself. But Abram will have significance, attached to THE NAME as an image bearer of the Creator God.
- And God will be on Abram's side. If people "curse Abram—that is try to bring him low—take away his life and his name, God will deal with them and take away their name—bring them low in life.
- And then, finally, here at least, God promises to make Abram his **conduit of redemption for the whole world**. The "Abram channel" will lead to the lake of all humans. The water of redemption will flow through Abram and his family to the world.
- I worked hard not to mention the word "blessing" until now so that I could make sure we concentrate on what God means by **blessing** rather than what we may think it means.
- If Abram leaves behind his *identity* sourced in the world and gives up the *life* he receives from the world, God will **ble**ss him, Abram will be a source of **ble**ssing himself and all the peoples of the world will **be** channeled blessing through him. Abram will be **ble**ssed himself, a source blessing and a conduit of blessing to all humans.
- What do we mean when someone sneezes and we say "God bless you?" I'm not sure many people say that any more and I'm not sure I ever understood exactly why we did it although I have heard many explanations. I ask the question simply to make us realize that we may not really understand what the word "*blessing*" means and certainly not in this context.
- I suspect God's blessing might mean to us something like God gives us good stuff or does good stuff for us. Good stuff is often the result

of God's blessing. However, us receiving good stuff is never the focus—never the end—never the point of God's blessing.

- In its purest sense, the point of God's blessing is "**God's gracious empowerment to fulfill God's plan and purpose.**" Here that overarching purpose of being image bearers of the Creator God is precisely what is in view. God is promising to bless Abram with the empowerment to fulfill his imaging purpose in life in a messy world.
- The blessing will empower Abram to become a great nation of image bearers. That's sort of a "nice stuff" for Abram as well, especially since God has asked him to trust and give up his nation he had when connected to the world.
- It's "nice stuff" that God's blessing will end up resulting in Abram also having a great name especially since God asked him to essentially leave his name from the world behind, but a great name as a human is a side effect not the point of God's blessing.
- As God empowers Abram by blessing him it's "nice stuff" that he will make Abram able to bless others and empower them in ways not listed here. We get to see some of those in the stories ahead.
- God is going to bless or empower those who bless or empower Abram in his purpose of being a nation of image bearers. God is going to "de-bless" or push down in failure those who try to "de-bless" or curse Abram in his efforts to fulfill God's purpose.
- Then a big "nice stuff"—God will empower—bless—Abram to be the seed through which **THE SEED** that will bless all peoples will come. We, of course find out this means the Messiah—the King and Savior, the Lord Jesus the Christ will, by God's blessing—by God's empowerment—come through Abram.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- The water of redemption will flow through Abram and his family until it reaches the most crucial narrowing of all human history when Jesus is born, lives, dies and rises again to new life.
- Those who preach a Gospel of worldly prosperity today fall just a bit short of the real point of God's blessings. Abram was blessed **not as an end but as a means to the end of redemption**. The blessing certainly changed Abram's life from his life in Ur. The blessing, would give Abram "nice stuff" such as a beloved son he longed for and it brought him wealth and influence in his world. But, the family and the stuff—the happiness and the success—Abram getting more of the life he wanted in this world was never the point of God's blessing Abram.
- That is an easy truth for believers today to forget. In fact, it is also an easy truth for believers today to reject and many do.
- Many believers today, have drunk deeply from the world's conclusion that, that if **religion** is to be worth anything, it had better give a person happiness and success now. It had better give you the clear answers to experiencing the good life by worldly standards in the here and now or why bother? God had better give people who believe in him and trust him **success** or why bother with the God stuff?
- But again, the end of God's blessing by faith is not that those who trust him get what they want. The end is God's redemptive water flows through them and his purpose is fulfilled in them.
- Don't get me wrong. In the end, those who trust God and participate by receiving his blessing—his empowerment to be his redemptive agents—his channels of living water in this world—will not be cheated out of life by God.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- I can promise you without any doubt that they will not miss out on anything truly good even as they trust God and LEAVE behind **land, people** and **family**—as they walk away from their identity and place they can get from the metrics of success in this world.
- I'm not emotionally certain of very many things these days, but I am absolutely certain of this truth. **We will not lose out when we give up what this world can give us to trust God for what he can give us.**
- How am I so certain? Is it just my own experience? No. Look at what the NT author of Hebrews writes about Abram and this very decision to trust God and leave the world behind. It is in **Hebrews 11:8-10**
- **Hebrews 11:8** *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*
- By faith—that is by trusting God's Word to him, Abram became a portable, tent-dwelling man instead of a man dwelling in palaces with earthly foundations that he might have been in the world he left behind.
- He gave up on being part of the human building of cities and towers with strong foundations, made from strong, *baked* brick and stuck together with *leakproof* tar to make them at least feel like they would last forever. He gave up on making a lasting name for himself in this world and started living in floppy, thin-walled tent made of goat and camel skin.
- Maybe this contrast was why Moses so carefully gave us the building specifications for the human tower of Babel back in chapter 11.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

Maybe he wanted us to sense the contrast between living in what seemed like a strong brick tower with a foundation tying it securely to the earth versus living in a tent with no earthly foundations that was just lightly pegged to the surface of the earth.

- In my application to us of this faith decision by Abram, I don't wish to trivialize it. This is not Abram deciding where to buy his next tank of gas and bravely trusting God for that decision.
- This is Abram deciding that the buildings and foundations promised by God—even if they remain unseen throughout a whole human life in this world—God's buildings and foundations are what matter. They are true LIFE.
- This is Abram deciding to trust God and leave behind what this world promises as life.
- This is Abram accepting "tent-dwelling" ***now***, for a ***city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God, later.***
- It was this decision of faith that allowed God to *bless* him, to make him a *blessing* and make him a conduit for the waters of redemption to *bless* all human beings.
- It was this major decision of faith to leave behind what this world could give in order to have what God could give.
- So when we pray for God to bless others, or us, are we praying for imposing looking baked-brick and tar-mortared towers now or tents now and a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God someday yet to be seen? What are we leaving and what are we seeking?
- "Good stuff" of life now, is not the point of God blessing Abram or blessing you and me either. I think sometimes we think it is and sometimes we pray for God's blessings with that end in mind rather than the true end of the blessing.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- Are we saying, "God please bless me with the world's stuff of health, prosperity and success that brings us significance now" or praying, "God please bless me with the empowerment to leave this world behind because I have your purpose with a much bigger outcome in mind even though I can't see it in the paradigm this world gives me to measure value."
- Again, I do not wish to trivialize this faith decision of Abram nor do I wish to suggest the man Abram is a perfect example for us to follow because he will not always walk by faith.
- But I cannot ignore the parallels of a pattern for our body—for FBC. For us, there is a much smaller iteration in a fractal pattern depicting leaving behind this world, and its foundations, for some foundationless tent-dwelling and eventually a city of God we cannot yet quite find on the map.
- As we consider what is next for us now that we have sold these "foundations," the pattern and its illustration is not quite what we might immediately think it to be or wish it to be.
- We are not now in the process of figuring out how to quit "tent-dwelling" by locating a new place geographically. We are not looking for our new city of foundations whose architect and maker is God BUT, just located further south--or north--or east--or west.
- No matter where we end up geographically—no matter what our new address might be, we are to live as tent-dwellers who have left this world by faith in God.
- *That faith choice is what God cared about first here with Abram.* Given that faith choice, God could easily show Abram where to go next. More importantly, with that faith choice to leave this world God could "bless Abram"—empower Abram to fulfill his created purpose even in a confused world.

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Faith Leaves the World Behind for the Blessing"

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-10

Rggjr/FBCCS/3-28-21 **UNEDITED**

- ***Because of faith in the LORD, God blessed Abram and will bless and empower us to carry out his plan and fulfill our purpose as image bearers. The faith in God to leave this world behind is what matters most not the place we pitch our tent.***
- What does one do each day as a tent-dweller moving around in life trusting God rather than the foundations and towers of the world? What does that life look like for Abram—for you—for FBC? Lord willing, that is for after Easter Sunday and a week's trip to Atlanta.
- However, since we no longer chain the only copy of Scripture to the pulpit here in the church building, you can read ahead in Genesis 12 if this leaves you feeling confused.
- ***Hint:*** It has to do with building *sacrificial altars* rather than heaven reaching-high towers to "touch" God.