

Introduction:

- A. The turmoil we see in the Middle East goes back for millennia. About 4000 years ago four kings from what we today call Iraq and Syria formed an alliance and dominated the kings and city-states to the south of them in Canaan. Each year they collected tribute and held control. But after 13 years of that five kings in southern Canaan rebelled—the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, and three other cities. So the four eastern kings launched a campaign to bring the others back into line. They stormed down the highway on the east side of the Joran River, crushing the little towns along the way. They went all the way down to the tip of the Red Sea and then started back up.

That was where the five Canaanite kings decided to make their stand. Five against four, on their own turf, in a valley treacherous with tar pits—which they surely should have been able to use to strategic advantage.

But it was a rout. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and some of *their* fleeing soldiers died in those tar pits. Others climbed into the rugged hills and others were captured. The four kings pillaged the five cities and carried away every person they found. And among their captives, according to **Gen 14:12**, *“They also carried off Abram’s nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.”* Turn to Gen. 14.

- B. We’ve been studying the life of Abraham, the Bible’s pioneer of faith in God. We saw in **Gen 12:2-3** how God promised Abram the richest of blessings... Last week we read how Abram and his nephew Lot decided to split up because the land couldn’t support them both. Lot chose to go to the very fertile area around Sodom, near the tip of what is now the Dead Sea, a fateful decision because the Bible tells us pointedly, *“the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.”* The prophet **Ezekiel**, writing centuries later recorded God’s charges against Sodom: *“She and her daughters were arrogant,*

overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them.” [16:49-50]

Well, it seems as though those cities have gotten what’s coming to them, doesn’t it? Conquered and captured. Good riddance! But there’s the problem of Lot, Abram’s nephew. What’s Abram to do about him? Read on: **14:13-16...**

- C. In these sermons we’re following the development of Abram’s faith so that we might grow deeper in our faith in the LORD. One thing we learn from these stories is that greater faith isn’t only the ability to believe God for more and more incredible things. Deeper faith is shown is settled obedience to God and in rejecting the values and patterns of this world in order to be holy and devoted to God. That’s the point of this story. **Our faith in God, coupled with our God-blessed lives, changes what we value.**

So back to this story in **Gen 14**. We’re not told if Abram thought about God’s promises, or if he prayed. But we know that when he heard his nephew had been captured and carried off by the invaders he rounded up his fighting men and mobilized his allies and went after him. And as he went God’s promise to bless those who blessed him and to curse those who cursed him came to pass. Here’s one thing that stood out to me:

I. FAITH PROMPTS GOD’S BLESSED PEOPLE TO TAKE RISKS OF GRACE (14:1-16)

- A. As we’ve mentioned before, Lot put himself in a very dangerous place when he decided to live in Sodom. Now he had been captured along with many others from that area—none of whom deserved God’s blessing. Remember these people are so incredibly wicked that God will eventually destroy them! Yet Abram goes after them.
- B. That’s God’s pattern. “*While we were still sinners Christ died for us.*” Jesus said, “*As the Father sent me, so send I you.*” That’s how God spreads the news of his love and salvation—by showing it through his people. And that’s what Abram did. That’s one of the things God meant when

he said, “*you will be a blessing.*” Ultimately God does that through Jesus Christ who is alive and working through us in this wicked and warlike world.

- C. As carriers of God’s blessing and agents of his grace we are expected to step into the mess of this world, into the mess in lives. We are bearers of God’s salvation, of his hope and goodness and love. We should be like spiritual first-responders. When others are running out of trouble, we go *in* for Jesus’ sake. We don’t run into these messes knowing people will respond to Christ. We *don’t* know that. What’s more, you may very likely *not* know what you’re going to do or how things will turn out but you go in anyway. You enter into someone’s mess, take the risk. You bring the blessing you carry to someone else’s life. That’s what Abram did and God was his deliverer, his shield of protection. The midnight raid worked and the armies of the four kings were routed and chased off the map!
- D. You know, that rescue was a kind of last chance for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. God would eventually destroy them in a rain of fire and brimstone—these very same people—but here he saved them and brought them safely home, with all their belongings. No strings attached. But not one turned to the God of Abram. They had undoubtedly cried out for mercy to those four conquering kings but not one cried out for mercy to God Most High who rescued them. People often portray the God of the OT as bloodthirsty and harsh but this tells a different story.
- E. One more thing here: notice how Abram’s status changed. In **v.13** he was called *Abram the Hebrew*, indicating that he was an outsider in this story—distinct from all the other groups of people identified. But by the end he had routed some kings and won the freedom of others. **Abram’s the one and only champion in this whole story.** Because God said, “*I will bless you... I will make your name great and you will be a blessing.*” This whole international incident ultimately turns on the pivot of God’s blessing of Abram. Ultimately, history doesn’t turn on wars or elections or

economics. God Most High, the Creator of heaven and earth, sees to it that all things come to those who have believed in his promise to bless them through Jesus Christ. **All history revolves around God's blessed people.**

Now things really get interesting! **V.17**, “*After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, **the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).***” Good name for the place because it's soon to be crowded with kings! The last time we saw the king of Sodom he was fleeing the battle. And remember, this king reigns over the most wicked city known to man. Or rather, he *had*. He's lost his army, his people and his possessions and now this slimeball comes out to meet Abram to negotiate because Abram has a right to keep all he has rescued. *Finders keepers, losers weepers.*

But the king of Sodom would have to sit in the waiting room for awhile because another king—a new king—shows up: v.18-20.... This man seems to come out of nowhere. Very uncharacteristically, Genesis does not give us any genealogical information about him. He is called by two names: king of righteousness (which is what Melchizedek means) and king of peace (Salem=*shalom*). Strikingly, he is not only a king but also the priest of God Most High. *El-Elyon*. **Up to now, we thought Abram was the only worshiper of the LORD in all of Canaan and then from out of nowhere comes this man who is not only a worshiper of God but also his priest—a designation no one takes for themselves, if they know what's good for them. Abram has found a brother, a friend, a true spiritual ally, and a priest to represent him to the LORD.**

We know from **Heb 7** that Jesus Christ is our high priest *in the order of Melchizedek*. He is to us what Melchizedek was to Abram.

II. JESUS CHRIST COMES TO US, AS MELCHIZEDEK CAME TO ABRAM, TO REINFORCE OUR FAITH IN GOD (14:17-24)

- A. The first thing this priest of God Most High did for Abram was bring out bread and wine. The king of Sodom is off stewing under a tree someplace but here God's priest welcomes Abram to God's table. **“You prepare a table**

before me in the presence of my enemies.” Here’s Abram, road-weary and bloodied from battle, leading homeless captives, having no true friend, and the LORD sends him this blessed king and priest. **For Abram, to eat with Melchizedek, God’s priest, was to fellowship with the Lord.** What a respite! What a relief! Of course, in the ages to come, the bread and wine would be invested with the meaning of salvation—of life and death, of union with God and his people. But here it was assurance of God’s friendship and company. God sent the meal and the king and priest with whom to enjoy it.

That, of course, is one of our privileges, too. Whether at the Communion table or not, we are invited to God’s table, to fellowship with him, to enjoy his company, until the day we join our Bridegroom Jesus at our Wedding Supper. Through Jesus, God will meet with you any time. Hebrews tells us to come boldly to God’s throne to find grace.

B. Then Melchizedek blessed Abram. This blessing was not just a good word, a Hallmark wish. This blessing, like that earlier blessing of God, penetrated into Abram’s soul. It permeated his mind and heart. It changed him. It came in two parts:

1. *“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.”* Up till now this has been a chapter with a lot of two-bit kings, whose names mean nothing to us, whose kingdoms are long forgotten, and whose gods aren’t worth mentioning. But here is the king of righteousness and peace conveying to Abram the blessing of the LORD of all—God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. This blessing has both a backward and forward look. The victory which Abram had just won was proof that he was *blessed by God Most High.* That is why Abram’s raid worked! That is why the enemy armies fled in such terrified confusion. That is why Abram was able to retrieve all the people and goods. ***Because God blessed him!*** The phrase also carries the ongoing promise of God’s blessing on

Abram. God's blessing was still in force and would follow him all the days of his life. And so it is when God blesses you. His blessing has been at work and will always be at work in your life, now and forevermore.

2. Melchizedek's blessing on Abram continues with praise to God: "*And praise be to God Most High who delivered your enemies into your hand.*" The great privilege of the God-blessed life is praising God for what he does for us. That we get to *see* his deliverance, *know* his love, *revel* in the riches he gives which will never fade away, and to praise him for it.

- C. V.20, "Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything." There were piles of recovered goods, I assume, and Abram carefully divided out a tenth which he gave to Melchizedek because Melchizedek represented God Most High who had delivered Abram. **Finders keepers didn't apply to Abram, it applied to God.** Although the Creator of heaven and earth certainly didn't need any of this stuff, it was only right to offer it to him as a sacrifice.

Something changed in Abram there. You'll remember that when he went to Egypt he basically conned Pharaoh out of a treasure trove which he brought back to Canaan. **Abram liked being rich.** But here with God's king and priest, his values changed suddenly and dramatically. Instead of taking he gave. And wealth lost its grip on Abram when he gave that tithe back to God.

The king of Sodom steps impatiently from the shadows, "surly and disrespectful." **V.21, "Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself,"** he said. He was trying to get his subjects back. **Abram's response tells you what has just happened in his heart: vv.22-24...** When do you think Abram had sworn with raised hand that oath to the LORD? I think it had just happened there with Melchizedek, when Abram saw where his true riches were, when he saw the treasure of God's company, God's blessing and God's protection. I think it happened when he

wanted to give a tithe of all he'd collected back to the LORD. His whole view of possessions changed right there.

I think that is still true when we tithe to God. **Generous giving doesn't make richer churches; it makes holier people.** It makes us richer people, as Abram here grew richer by rejecting the world's grip. **Generous giving to God results in God-blessed lives. Every time.**

- D. Are you indebted to the world? Can the world say, *I made you rich*? It's a hard question to sort out, I know, living with the prosperity we have. But where are your *treasures* stored up? Do you treasure the Lord's company, his table fellowship, with you? Do you prize above all things the blessing of God on your life? Do you believe that God is your shield and your very great reward? Do you delight in giving back to the Lord from what he has given you?

Conclusion

Great faith is not only about believing God for the incredible. Mature faith values the God-blessed life above all else, and refuses to take so much as a thread from this world that threatens our loyalty to him alone.

In the morning, when I rise
In the morning, when I rise
In the morning, when I rise
Give me Jesus

Give me Jesus
Give me Jesus
Give me Jesus
You can have all this world
You can have all this world
Just give me Jesus

When I am alone...
When I come to die...

Give me Jesus
Give me Jesus
You can have all this world
You can have all this world
You can have all this world
Just give me Jesus