

SERMON GUIDE

Genesis: Mystery, Giving, & Living By Principle

Genesis 14:17-24



2.25.2024

SERMON NOTES:

Last year, we laid out a new vision initiative at TJC that focuses on Building Up and Sending Out. The Lord has blessed our church and we're witnessing incredible things happen: people coming to faith, people growing in their faith, people stepping in leadership, people sharing their faith at work, and so much more.

The vehicle for running after this vision has been called ARISE. We've put a focus on doing certain things over a two-year period that will help us walk in this vision.

The church has been so awesome to respond with generous giving. We pledged \$10.4M over two years as a church, and with one year under our belt, we have brought in \$5.2M. That's incredible. We're on pace to hit our goal...but I'll be honest with you, I'm praying we'll smash our goal. I pray by the end of this year we cross \$12M, because we are seeing lots of growth and our needs only continue to grow. Upgrading our facilities here on campus will be crucial as the church keeps growing and as the Lord continues bringing people by the ten of thousands to Lebanon and Wilson County each year.

SO if you're newer to TJC, that's what ARISE is. You are here at one of the most exciting times of our church's 18-year history. So jump on board with us. We want to do what William Carey called: Expect Great Things, Attempt Great Things. Expect great things FROM God, Attempt Great Things FOR God. That's what we're going to keep doing here.

Text: Genesis 14:17-24

This passage introduces us to one of the most mysterious figures in all of Scripture. Melchizedek has perplexed Jews and Christians alike from the time of Moses till today. Who is he? What is he? How are we to understand him? And how are we to understand Abraham's interaction with him?

BACKGROUND OF Genesis 14:1-16 -- Abraham responds to the news that Lot had been taken captive and his possessions plundered by calling the trained men in his household (318 of them) and deploying them tactically to recover Lot and his goods. This is like a Navy Seal team mission. They go in at night, rescue Lot and his things, and go back to homebase. It's a pretty manly mission and response. Abraham is older, but he ages like Clint Eastwood and is not to be messed with.

Exegesis of Genesis 14:17-24

VS 17-20 -- 17 After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) 19 And he blessed him and said,

**“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
20 and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”**

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Abraham returns from this mission and these kings who had been defeated go out to meet him. We then read that Melchizedek, the King of Salem, brought out bread and wine. Then it states Melchizedek was a priest of God Most High.

Okay, so there's a lot here. Melchizedek is a king, particularly, the king of Salem. Salem is what we'll eventually be called Jerusalem. He brings out bread and wine, and it's interesting that Moses puts in parentheses that he was a priest of the Most High God. There is definitely something in the bread and wine which should remind us of the Passover Meal and the Lord's Supper. But remember...there's been no Passover, and Jesus hasn't reinterpreted the Passover meal as a picture of His own sacrificial death. Even though Melchizedek comes with bread and wine to restore the weary bodies of Abraham and his men, there is no doubt a picture here of the bread and cup being offered as Christ does to us.

What do we make of Melchizedek? He's like Bombadil in Lord of the Rings. He kind of shows up. We don't know much about him. There are more mysteries than answers. We know he's different. We're just not sure in what way exactly.

Hebrews 7:3 -- He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

In Psalm 110, we have the description of the Messiah/Redeemer as a king and priest. Nobody else in all of Scripture fulfilled that role (including David) but Melchizedek. Notice too that Melchizedek is called a priest of the Most High God, but the official priesthood of Israel begins with Aaron, who you could say is in the loins of Abraham, but won't arrive in his role for 300+ years. So the priesthood begins with Aaron in Exodus, but Melchizedek is a priest of the Most High God already when Abraham meets him. Melchizedek then pronounces a blessing over Abraham (vs 19-20).

What is Abraham's response to meeting the King/Priest? He gives Melchizedek a tenth of everything he has (of all his wealth). This is the first time we see tithing in the Bible. I'm going to come back to this.

VS 21-24 -- 21 And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself." 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.' 24 I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share."

The king of Sodom approaches Abraham and asks for his people back that were rescued but offers Abraham to keep the rest of the spoils. But Abraham refuses to take anything, even the least thing, and it appears this has come by an oath he took to the LORD. Abraham doesn't want it to be concluded that he became wealthy because of the King of Sodom, and perhaps he doesn't want the King of Sodom to resent him for taking his goods. In either case, Abraham takes back his own people, but all the spoils that belonged to others went to them.

Notice this is after giving Melchizedek a tenth of all his wealth. Abraham could have looked at this as an opportunity to replenish his portfolio after giving, but he doesn't. He gives in worship (by principle) and he refuses to take the good of the King of Sodom (by principle).

A couple of application points for us in this text today:

I. Recognize the reality of mystery

The language we often use around TJC is open-handed issues and closed-handed issues. Or "tiers." Not everything is equal. Some things are open-handed, and we have room for disagreement or to hold different positions.

When it comes to Melchizedek, he is an open-handed issue. The two places most people land on who/what he is are: 1. a typology of Jesus, or 2. a Christophany of Jesus. A typology foreshadows or points to a greater reality. We see this throughout the Old Testament in Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, and so on. A Christophany is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. This means a physical appearance of Jesus before He was actually incarnate through the Virgin birth. The reason we say Jesus, or the Second Person of the Trinity, is He is the only Person in the Trinity that ever takes on bodily form or human appearance. The Father and the Spirit never do this. So when Jacob wrestles with "a man" who was God in Genesis 32. This is a Christophany. Or when Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego have a 4th figure in the fire with them in Daniel 3. Or when Isaiah sees a vision of the Lord high and lifted up in the Temple.

So is Melchizedek a typology or a Christophany? Raise your hand if you think typology (he is a type of Christ, a pointer to Jesus). Raise your hand if you think it is a Christophany (a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus). I don't know who is right. But this is what we know, either way: He is a Christlike figure (whether a typology or Christophany). We have to put Melchizedek in the mystery box.

There are things that are not for us to know. Some things we will never fully understand or have clarity on.

Deuteronomy 29:29 -- *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*”

There are things on this side of Heaven we will never know. And there are likely things on the other side of Heaven we will never know either. But notice this text says the things He has revealed belong to us and our children forever. In other words, not everything is revealed to us, but not everything is a mystery. What God has clearly given us we are to follow and obey.

We get into trouble when we try to solve mysteries and turn clear truths into mystery.

Mysteries we can't resolve:

- Melchizedek is a typology or Christophany
- The nature of God's sovereignty over all things and human responsibility
- God's purposes in disaster and suffering

Clear truths we can't turn into mystery:

- Faith in Jesus is the only way to be reconciled to God
- God is Three in One (One God, Three Persons)
- God created male and female, by His design and purposes
- Sex is made by God He alone sets the standards of holiness around it

The reason I bring all this up. It is our nature to do the opposite of what we're supposed to do. After all, we're fallen creatures, so we shouldn't be surprised by this. Here's how it usually plays itself out when we get it wrong...

- more mature believers fall prey to trying to solve mysteries...
- more immature believers (and many unbelievers) try to turn clear truths of God into mysteries...

These axioms are generally true in most cases. I'm not saying you have to do either. I'm saying these are typically the fault lines of struggle.

Recognize the role of mystery but avoid the trap of labeling things God has clearly revealed as a mystery.

II. True Worship of God includes our Giving

If I didn't offend you in the first point, I'll get some more of you with this one.

This is the first mention of a tithe, a tenth of wealth, given in Scripture. Abraham isn't worshipping Melchizedek. But he gives Melchizedek, a priest of the Most High God, a tenth of His wealth.

Why? What is this? It is worship. It is a response to the blessing Melchizedek says over Abraham where we see God Most High deliver Abraham's enemies into his hand. Abraham's response to God's blessing and favor is he gives.

Abraham gives a tenth of his wealth. He tithes. This is the first mention of tithing. The command to tithe doesn't come until hundreds of years later with Moses and the Law. However, we do see giving/offering mentioned in Genesis 4 with Cain and Abel. Now, I'm going to highlight what happens in that story briefly, but I'm also going to give a high-level overview of the Bible's teaching on giving/tithing and its connection to worship.

In Genesis 4, Cain and Abel both bring an offering to God. There are two descriptions given that give us a clue about why God received Abel's and rejected Cain's. It tells us, "in the course of time, Cain brought an offering to God." This phrase "in the course of time" is more than telling us "one day Cain gave an offering." It's showing us that there is a delay in his offering. It's not his first fruit. Abel on the other hand gives the firstborn of his flocks. This isn't an issue of produce versus livestock, it is an issue of first fruits versus leftovers. Here's the big idea that follows throughout Scripture when it comes to giving and offerings to God: true worshippers give God the first. The first fruits are the first thing we receive. We get paid, the first fruits go out.

How much? Well, this is where we see Abraham's tenth given, and we see the tenth commanded by Moses in the law. God even condemns Israel later in Malachi (3:8-12) for robbing Him by withholding their tithes and first fruits. In the New Testament, Jesus spoke a LOT about giving. Roughly 25% of Jesus' teaching is on stewardship. The two basic premises emphasized over and over: **1. God is the owner of all resources, and 2. We are the manager of some of God's resources.** This is key to understanding stewardship. It's all God's. We manage some. Then Paul gets into giving, generosity, and stewardship in 2 Corinthians 8-9. He gives four principles: **1. Giving should be cheerful because we love to give to the God who has given so generously to us. 2. Giving should be sacrificial but varies according to income. 3. Giving should be regular and planned, not only when an appeal is made. 4. Giving should be proportional so that it increases as our standard of living does.**

A few extra thoughts on this. There's often a debate over whether a tenth/tithing is still an obligation for Christians. This is such a lame debate. If it's still an obligation, you should do it joyfully and exceed it. If it's not still an obligation, beware of seeing that as a license for lack of generosity. I personally believe that giving 10% is the starting point for Christians. That's faithfulness, not generosity. I think forcing yourself to do this, and even beyond, grows your faith and forms your heart more toward the things of God.

Don't let your mismanagement of money and wealth be a source of disobedience to God in this area of your life. If your standard of living is keeping you from being faithful in this area of your life, then you fit what God said about robbing Him. If you don't get your heart right about money, you'll never make enough to be happy. So worship the Lord for His kindness to you with generous giving.

Here's the amazing thing: your giving multiplies and fuels the work of ministry. Just a few examples of this from the last few weeks alone:

- We've helped 5 families with benevolence recently
- We've had 8 people graduate from our Regen program (recovery ministry)
- We've had 9 inmates at the county jail begin theology programs through our jail ministry
- We've launched a grief share ministry that has 14 people in it
- We have 6 new people in our long-term missions pipeline, and 5 actively working with IMB to go long-term somewhere to share Christ
- We helped solve an issue in the home of a widow in our church

And I could keep going on salvations, ministry to students, kids, pastoral residency, the new school, and more. All of this is possible because of the faithful giving and obedience of people who recognize all that God has done for them.

III. Live a principled life

So Abraham is acting on principle vs the whims and feelings of the moment. He is making decisions (in this instance) in advance about what he is going to do and what kind of man he is going to be rather than waiting to see how he feels in the moment. The big idea here is we should decide what kind of person we're going to be in advance of whatever circumstances we could find ourselves in. When we resolve to live by biblical principles and values, it settles 10,000 different decisions we could be confronted to make.

**I'm going to be the kind of person that forgives others instead of holding grudges.

**I'm going to be the kind of person (kind of family) that gathers on Sundays to worship the Lord.

**I'm going to be the kind of person that prioritizes relationships with my family over climbing the corporate ladder.

**I'm going to be the kind of person that gives my first fruits: consistently, cheerfully, and generously.

**I'm going to be the kind of person that provides for my family and protects them at all costs.

Christians are the kind of people who lived principally. We don't wait to see what's popular, convenient, easy, or how we feel before making decisions. We live by God's Word and decide in advance how we're going to live.

I'll close with this challenge:

One of the greatest mysteries you'll never solve, that also happens to be a truth as crystal clear as anything in all of Scripture, is that God loved us that He gave His Son Jesus to live for our righteousness and die for our sins.

Why would God do this? He doesn't owe us anything. But He did. He shows His love for us in this that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And He rose from the dead. All who believe in Him have eternal life, sins forgiven, reconciled to God. It's the clearest mystery in all the Bible.

There is no amount of giving or generosity, nor principled living, that can ever reconcile us to God. Only faith in Jesus can redeem us. If you're not in Christ, the most important thing you can get from this message is that the bread and wine of Melchizedek points to the realization of the lamb slain for sinners, whose body was broken and blood was shed for our forgiveness. Call out to Him today.

If you are in Christ, live in worshipful obedience to Him. Live principally by the Word, determined in advance what kind of man or woman you will be. Recognize all that He has done for you to merit your personal response of worship to Him. He's worthy. Let's strive to live like it every day.

LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?

BUILD UP

- **REVIEW:**
 - Read **Genesis 14:17-24** and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
 - What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
 - Additional Scripture:
 - Psalm 110:4
 - Hebrews 6:20
 - Hebrews 7:3
 - Proverbs 3:9
 - 2 Corinthians 9:7
 - Deuteronomy 14:22-29
 - Luke 21:1-4
 - John 14:15
 - Romans 12:2
 - Philippians 4:8

- **REFLECT:**

- Who was Melchizedek?
- What did the bread and the wine represent?
- Why did Abraham give him a tenth of his wealth?

- **RESPOND:**

- Does your giving reflect your worship of God? Why or why not?
- Do you live a life of principle based on the truth of Scripture? What does that look like?

- **MEDITATE:**

- **Genesis 14:19-20 -- 19 And he blessed him and said,**

***“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
20 and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”***

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

- What does this tell me about God?
- What does this tell me about people?
- How do I respond to this?
 - Is there an application to make?
 - A sin to avoid?
 - A promise to claim?
- What do these terms mean:
 - *He blessed him*
 - *God Most High*
 - *Possessor of heaven and earth*
 - *Delivered*
 - *Enemies*
 - *Into you hand*

- **MEMORIZE:**

- Philippians 4:8 -- *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

SEND OUT

- **GROW:** How will you abide in Christ this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **GO:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**
 - Pray over any request from your group members.

- Worship Ministry Assistant - **Ashley Horvath**



- Ministry - **Journey Worship Co.**
- **Pray for our long-term families on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
- **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
 - Kaesi
- **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Middle-Eastern Turkmen in Syria



- **Population in country:** 1,814,000
- **Global population:** 4,636,000
- **Christian Adherent:** 0.00%
- **Evangelical:** 0.00%
- **Primary Religion:** Islam
- **Primary Language:** Turkish
- **Summary:** The Turkmen have deep roots in Central Asia, but a small number of them live in Syria. Though most are Sunni Muslims, some are part of the Alawite religion. The Sunnis among them blend in well with the Syrian Arab majority and

even marry into their families. The Alawites, by contrast, are sometimes mistaken for Gypsies and rejected by the Syrians.

- **Prayer Focus:** There is no Christian tradition among the Turkmen, either in Turkmenistan or in Syria. Islam is all they know and all most of them ever want to know. But God has a remnant and we will pray for them to be revealed soon.
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