

Genesis 12:1-8

March 9, 2008 – 5th SUNDAY IN LENT

“You Will Be a Blessing”

† **Super abundant promises** (vv.1-5)

† **Bold public worship** (vv.6-8)

In the name of Jesus, the Seed of Abraham, dear fellow heirs of the **Blessing**:

What do you want to be when you grow up? As children of the heavenly Father, all of us are still infants in our faith, yet bound for glory. As the Lord’s apostle wrote to the early Christians, “**Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**” (2 Peter 3:18 NIV) So what do you want to be when you grow up in faith? Policemen, firemen, doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, faithful fathers, God-blessed mothers – wherever God leads you in your continuing Christian education, God says to His children: “**You Will Be a Blessing.**” What a great goal for life! “**Be a Blessing**” God commands. “**You Will Be a Blessing**” God promises. But like a child too short to reach the top shelf, we all need a boost from our Father. In fact, we need our Creator to give us life and clean us inside and out with His...

† **Super abundant promises** (vv.1-5)

Back when his name was still Abram, walking, talking Abraham was dead in sin. Idolatry was a family trait. Centuries later *Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants....Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.’”* (Joshua 24:1f,14 NIV)

What idols does God want us to throw away? For Saturday morning jobs as kids in a tiny house, Mom and Dad made us sort and toss whatever we no longer used. Instead of giving to our Mission Thrift Store do we play “pack rat” with things we love more than God? Does junk pluck our heartstrings more than our Creator’s love? *The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.”* Abram had to leave his father’s house; James and John had to leave their “*boat and their father*” to follow Jesus and become “*fishers of men*” (Matthew 4:20f). Along with our responsibility to love and care for our families comes the love we owe to God above all. What idols are hard to toss? What earthly things are hard for us to leave behind?

If Abraham had refused to obey, he would have lost the hope of heaven and spent eternity in hell. So will we if anything comes between us and God. How did Abraham do it? Not by will power or superior character but by the **Super abundant promises** of God. For God grace and mercy are as natural as when you see a little tike climbing into a car seat. Instinctively, you grab and lift. Our heavenly Father does the same with the **Super abundant promises** of His Word. To the childless man and his barren wife who had to leave everything behind God promised: “**I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.**” God promised to take it personally however anyone treated His son Abram: “**I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**” Ah, that’s the one that got him. More details would follow, but God promised Abraham a super Descendant who would be the Savior of all people. God’s command to leave carried God’s promise to bless not only Abraham and his family, but all the families on earth. Their guilt and shame from worshiping idols would disappear in the flood of blood from God’s own Son, the long-promised Seed of Abraham, to bless “**all peoples on earth.**”

With that kind of fuel in the engine, faith fired up. *So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.*” That would be like coming to Harantown with all your belongings in a car and leaving with a fleet of semis for all your herds, flocks and furniture. How does God bless you more when you leave everything behind? How can things get better while you’re moving? I see only one explanation. The **Super abundant promises** of God grow your faith and your livelihood the less you worry about it and the more you trust God, the Giver of *“every good and perfect gift”* (James 1:17). As He says in another **Super abundant** command-n-promise combo: *“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.”* (Psalm 37:4 NIV) When faith is fueled by God’s **Super abundant promises** ordinary people do extraordinary things.

✠ **Bold public worship (vv.6-8)**

Imagine a fleet of semis rolling into your neighborhood and parking on your lawn. Sounds and smells of diesel engines would give you a headache. But what if police couldn’t do anything? Or the invaders said the land was theirs by divine right? Assault rifles might seem a little more normal.

Humanly speaking, it’s still a mystery why the Canaanites did not attack. *Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.”* Divine right? Wouldn’t you ask, “How’s that, LORD? One of my descendants will own all this? Maybe I’d better keep quiet. These Canaanites might have a different plan for their land.”

But God was not only protecting Abraham, He empowered his eyes of faith to see the greatest opportunity to **Be a Blessing**. The coming Christ, his super Descendant would carry the sins of the world to the cross and leave them in the empty tomb. In full view of the Canaanites Abram *“built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.”* More needed to know. So *“from there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. Bold public worship* for all to see and hear.

Our children often demonstrate this in such beautiful ways. I remember one summer day when my daughter shouted, *“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests”* (Luke 2:14). Her midday praise broke through my cloud of blue. One Monday evening we lost our only two mission volunteers. But my little boy brushing his teeth almost made it worth it when he said, “Dad, I’m sad when you’re sad.” How many of our New Life children have played Sunday School with neighbor, retelling the lifesaving message of Jesus? How many have sat their siblings down to reteach the Children’s Lesson? How many hours and dollars have ordinary people offered up to spread the Good News of our extraordinary God, only to find them coming back a hundred fold? This too is **Bold public worship** that won’t hold back in fear but is powered to go and tell by God’s **Super abundant promises**. **“You Will Be a Blessing”** dries tears of disappointment and puts the spring back in your step. To **“Be a Blessing”** means to grow up in Jesus. And it gives the Father and His children great pleasure all the way.

How good God has been to us that we can now look back on twenty years of Gospel blessings as we gather a 25th Anniversary Committee! On nearly every Sunday since that first service, 9/13/1997, our sisters in Christ have served refreshments, calling up substitutes when they can’t help on their Sunday. Church cleaning continues with Church Family groups. From zero volunteers that sad Monday night, God’s grace has blessed us with vibrant volunteers, praying and planning on their own, not to be limited by the Pastor’s schedule and energy. Now our lay evangelists are preparing for the School of Outreach to learn more ways to share the sweet Good News of Jesus, the great Savior-Descendant of Abraham. **Bold public worship** – still growing, still going with the Gospel. **“You Will Be a Blessing!”** Lord, you have helped us this far. Help us keep growing and loving more and more for Jesus’ sake. Amen.