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November 22, 2020

GENESIS 12:1-9

Series: Understanding Your Roots

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[PRAYER] ...to us and teach us and inspire us. We pray, Lord, that you would give us something that would give us grace in our hearts today that we need. Lord, we are needy people. We recognize that we are strong because of you and who you are and what you're doing in our lives. So make yourself powerfully real in these next few moments as we open your word. We do it with anticipation and excitement. In Jesus' name, amen.

God wants to bless you. How many of you are already blessed? Alright. So you already experienced the blessing of God. God wants to bless you more. The word 'blessing' is this idea of gift. God wants to give you gifts. He wants to bless you with these gifts. When we say *bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name*, when we're saying, "Lord, I want to bless you," what we're saying is I want to give you gifts. I want to give you gifts of worship. I want to give you gifts of song. I want to give you gifts of praise. I want to give you the gift of my heart, my life. That's blessing the Lord when we use it that way.

Now we're going to look in Genesis 12 at a man who was blessed, Abraham. God had a particular blessing attached to his name that was his packaged blessing. Abraham's blessing. We're going to learn from it. We're going to get some illustrations for how God would have us be blessed. But that was his blessing. Each one of us could stand up and talk about the blessing that God has given to us and how He's worked in our lives.

I want to first take us to another passage of scripture. I want to take you to a passage in Ephesians. I want you to see what happens with the blessing that God wants to give to us. So if you'll look with me at Ephesians 1:3-8 it says this: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

Let me just point out that one of the reasons that God wants to bless us is because He wants us to be wowed with His greatness. So that we will say, "Praise the Lord for the blessings He's given us." That's one of the reasons. Think about blessing, not just from your perspective for a moment, about the things you get. But think about it from God's perspective. Why is He blessing? One reason is to wow us with His goodness so that we'll be impressed with Him and we'll worship Him and we'll praise Him. That's one of the reasons He blesses us.

It says also – *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.* What that means is that the blessing that He has has a nametag on it. The gift is a

package wrapped with your name on it. You're chosen. It's a very specific gift. We're going to look at Abraham and the gift that God gave to him, the blessing that He did in his life. But we have to realize that God is doing different things in each of our lives and He's chosen us. That means He's given you a particular blessing.

I suspect this week you'll be counting your blessings. You'll be thinking about blessings. This is Thanksgiving week. So I would suggest that another reason that God blesses us is so that we'll develop gratitude in our hearts. Because gratitude transforms us. It changes us. It helps us to focus outside of ourselves. It's another reason that God blesses us. He gives us this gift of gratitude that we have because we see the blessings around us. He chose us. You have a particular kind of blessing that God has given to you and He wants to expand that. I'm going to show you how He's going to and wants to expand that today in our lives.

It says – *He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.* See, foundationally the blessing that God has given us is salvation. Making us different than other people. Rescuing us from sin and the darkness and the depression and the brokenness in the world. God has given us something very important.

He continues and says – *in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.* I think some people have this view of God's blessing that He has His hand wrapped around the blessing and that we pry His hand open through our prayers and through our good works and other things so that we can get the blessings of God. That picture is not a good one. I would suggest that God is lavishing it. It's like it's pouring out. It's like a shower of His blessing coming down on us and it's our job to get under the shower so that we can receive it. If I'm in the bathroom and I want to get clean, I don't get clean by standing outside of the shower. I don't clean just by going into the bathroom. I've got to get under the shower of God's blessing. I've got to position myself to receive the blessing of God. God has more for you. God has more blessings He wants to give to you and it's your job to position yourself under the blessing so that you can receive them.

That's what we're going to see in Abraham's life today. And that's what God wants to do with each of us. Just imagine God has all these blessings with your name on them ready to give them to you. He wants to pass them onto you in your life.

So now let's go to Genesis 12:1-3 and learn more about this guy Abraham. He's an example of a man that God blessed. We look at the heroes in the Bible because when we look at those heroes in God's word we're inspired to learn from them, we're inspired to be like them. We're inspired to see how God worked in their lives. That's why we look at the heroes. If you're a young person or an older person, I'd encourage you to look at about seventy-five Bible heroes. Just list every hero that you can find in the Bible. You'll find about seventy-five of them. When you do, right next to each of them, what's the lesson we learn from that hero? What is God teaching us through that hero that we can apply to our lives? We're going to do that with just one guy, Abraham, and we're going to be inspired to follow his leadership so we can experience more of what God has for us, more of the blessing that God wants to give.

Genesis 12:1-3 reads this way: *The Lord said to Abraham... I say Abraham, you notice it says Abram. I'm going to confuse those back and forth because his name is going to get changed from Abram to Abraham. That's for another sermon at another time. But for now his name is Abram. "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you."* The word *bless* is used five times in these three verses. Which leads me to talk more about blessings and the gifts that God wants to give us. *"I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

Abraham. In order to understand Abraham and his story we have to go to some other places in the scriptures that give us more details about Abraham and his life in order to understand it more fully. Today I'm preaching a sermon about Abraham and I'm taking practical applications that we're going to apply to our own lives.

Right now I'm going to take you to another man who preached a sermon about Abraham. He preached a sermon about Abraham and he wanted to give an application to the lives of those people listening. The man's name is Joshua. As Joshua preaches his sermon in Joshua 24, what he does is he shares with the people an important message and the conclusion of his sermon is this. He says to the people, "Will you serve the Lord?" And they all say, "We will serve the Lord." And he goes on a little bit more and he says, "I'm going to ask you again, will you serve the Lord?" And they say, "We will. We will serve the Lord." That's the end of the sermon.

I'm going to go back to the beginning of the sermon in Joshua 24 where we learn about Abraham. *Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says."* Now what Joshua does in his sermon, which I think is very wise, and I think anybody who's preaching this sermon needs to do this is we start with a word from the Lord. This is where we're going to start. That's why we open God's word. It is His word. We start with God's word. We don't start with great ideas or funny stories. I might tell funny stories. You guys usually don't laugh at my funny stories, but I try to tell them occasionally. What we do is we look at God's word. It is our foundation for what we're doing. And that's what he does. He starts with this word of the Lord.

"This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants.'

There's two things we learn there that you're going to see. One is about Terah his father. We'll learn more about him in just a moment. But the most important thing I want you to see in this passage is that he came from a pagan background. Do you see that? They worshiped other gods. And God in a very personal way steps into Abraham's life and calls him out of where he was out of his paganism.

I think if we went right around, everybody could share where God called you out of. Everybody has a different story about where you are, why you are where you are today. That God has

chosen you, He's picked you, and He's reached into your life. Because God is very personal in this regard. He comes into each of our lives and does something individually for us.

For me I got saved when I was three years old. I look at three year olds and I go, "I don't know what they understand about anything," yet that was my commitment to the Lord at three. My parents nurtured that. Now that you've accepted Jesus it was all of this – this is how we live, this is how we pray, this is how we go to church, this is how we read the Bible, this is how we memorize the Bible, this is how we serve the Lord. So it all was built on that commitment I made. I grew in my faith as a result. It was a very personal thing for me that God did when I was young.

When I was fourteen years old a youth leader in my church saw that I was serving the Lord and he says, "Have you ever thought about committing your life to fulltime Christian ministry?" At that moment God used that youth leader to speak something into my heart that said yeah, this is something that I need to do. So God called me in a new way at that point to serve Him in a special way.

We could all talk about the call that God has made. How He's moved us from where we were to where we are now. For Abraham he came into this pagan environment and called Abraham out of that. Just fascinating where God goes and how He calls people.

When you start studying missions and you see what's going on, you hear stories about how God calls people from all kinds of different situations. Some missionaries come into a village and they start talking to people about the Lord and then in this one village they say, "Oh. We've been waiting for you. We knew there was this God, but we didn't know who He was. We already built Him a house. So we're ready for that." It's just God does this. He speaks into our lives in a powerful way. That's Joshua's sermon. We learn a little bit more about Abraham and his application was let's serve the Lord. A good application for us. We're going in a little bit different direction, but He starts with Abraham.

I want to take you to another sermon of another guy who starts with Abraham. In this sermon in Stephen's life he's going to share the sermon with the people and in Acts 7:2-4 he's going to talk about Abraham. Now in his sermon he's trying to convince the people listening that God is in charge, God is working, and that He's got a great plan that He's doing. And he starts back there with Abraham. So let's go to his sermon and see what he does and how he develops this so we can learn a little bit more about Abraham.

It says in Acts 7 – Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, "Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you." Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living.

What this gives us a little of the chronology of Abraham's life. That God called him from Ur of the Chaldees. Let me show you a map that illustrates this. God called him from Ur of the Chaldees to go...well actually he's going to go all the way over there to Shechem. That's the

call. I want you to leave your kindred, leave your family, leave your everything, and I want you to go over there to this place I'm going to guide you to.

Well Abraham did leave Ur, but it says he took his father as part of the entourage. We don't know the whole story, but he stops in Haran and he's stuck there for several years. He has to pause there and it seems that he has to pause there until his father dies before God then gives him the command again. So first this passage that Stephen's sermon shares with us is that God called him when he was down here. "Leave everything. Come to me. Follow me. I'm going to take you into the Promised Land." But he goes up to Haran and then he stops there. And he's stuck. For many years he has to wait there until his father dies. And when his father dies then God calls him again. "Come on. Come over here."

I would just pause here for a moment in this part of the story to say that sometimes the blessing is waiting for us because something is holding us back. It's preventing us from experiencing the blessing that God has for us. In this case he waited for his father to die before he could go on in his life and experience the blessing. But God's going to speak to him again. He says, "Come on. I've got something for you." I don't know what might be holding you back, but whatever it is, you need to realize that sometimes in order to get the blessing you must leave something. You have to let go of something in order to get where God wants you to be. In fact I would suggest that's always the case. If you want to move to the next level in your spiritual life with the Lord, you probably have to drop something off of your life. That's hard sometimes.

One man was climbing on this canyon, on this trail and somehow he fell off the trail, but grabbed onto this sturdy branch. So he's hanging onto the branch, but nobody's around. And so he yells, "Is anybody out there?"

God says, "I'm here. What can I do for you?"

"Help me!" he says.

God says, "Do you believe that I can help you?"

And the man says, "Yes! I believe! Please help me here?"

"Do you believe that I want to help you?"

"Yes, I believe it. Please help me! Get me off of here!"

He says, "Okay. Then let go of the tree."

The man says, "Is anybody else out there?"

Now I think that sometimes what happens in our lives is we say, "God, I don't want to give up what I'm holding onto." And sometimes in order to get to the next place, in order to experience the blessing that God has in our lives, often we must let go of something in order to get to the place where God would have us.

So the story picks up in Genesis 12:1-3 in Haran where God is saying to Abraham, "Come on, this is where we're going and I'm going to bless you." So I want to read that passage again now. Now that you see where he is and where he's going we want to talk about this blessing that he has. But I want to compare it to last week's message.

Now last week we talked about the tower of Babel and we talked about verse 4 in chapter 11. So if you're taking notes in your notebook, you might make a cross reference to verse 4 of chapter

11. I put the contrast here on the slide so you that you can see them. Notice the different between the people who are building the tower of Babel and what they say to themselves and what God is saying to Abraham. There are some similarities. Like a great name. They're both talking about a great name. But notice what it says there in verse 4 of chapter 11. It says – *Let us*. Let us build a city. Let us build a tower. Let us make a name for ourselves. It's all about me. It's all focused on me. It's what I'm going to do. I'm going to build my kingdom. I'm going to do what I need to do. It's all about myself. It's that pride we talked about last week.

But notice chapter 12. *“Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. “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.”*

You see there are times in our lives where we live in chapter 11 when we really should be living in chapter 12.

I was having a hard day one of the days this week with a lot of work. There was just all these things. So my temptation is when the work gets hard, I work harder. I get more intense and sometimes when I get more intense it's all about chapter 11 for me. I start saying, “I've got to do this. I've got to do this. I've got to get above water here. I've got to tread water faster,” or whatever it is to get above my to-do list. And sometimes what I need to do is move into chapter 12 and say, “God, would you do this? Would you make this happen?” Don't get stuck in chapter 11 when God wants you to be in chapter 12. We have to let go of some things sometimes in order to get where we need to be. We can't be self-focused. We need to be moving forward.

Well let's look at the blessing now and the words that God says to Abram and let's see what lessons we can learn. First of all He says – *I will bless you*. I am going to give good things to you. But notice He doesn't stop there. Because I think there's a third reason. I mentioned a couple reasons why God blesses us. One is He blesses us so we can be wowed, so we can praise Him. Secondly, He blesses us so that we'll be grateful in our hearts and we can share that gratefulness with others. Thirdly, we're blessed so that we can be a blessing. Isn't that what it says in the passage? *I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing*. So God blesses us so we can be a blessing. He gives us things so that we can pass it onto others.

So I titled this sermon “Are You a Bucket or a Hose?” See the idea is if you're a bucket then what you're doing is saying, “God, fill my bucket. I want my bucket filled up. Lord, I can fit a little bit more in here. I want more in my bucket. Lord, I can make my bucket bigger. Just give me more and more and more.” So that's what we do sometimes. We think we're a bucket. But God says you're not a bucket; you're a hose. You're the vehicle through which I pass the blessing. So you get a little of it, you get to enjoy it, but it goes out to a world that is waiting for it in need. There are people all around us that are waiting for the blessing and God allows us to pass it on. It is such a privilege to be the vehicle through whom which God passes His grace. Sometimes it's an encouraging word you give to someone. God has just passed His grace through you. You've been a hose to someone else and shared that message with them. It's a privilege to be used by God, to be a blessing, and to pass the message on to someone else.

Let's take an example. Let's look at money for a moment. God often gives us money so we can pass it on and bless other people with it. I'm sure that you are aware of that. But let me tell you a personal story. One of the blessings we have at Calvary Chapel Living Hope is that Ted Seidel is part of our church. He's listening now. I'm sure he listens every week. Ted and Mary Lou were married a couple years ago. They're eighty-something. I don't know how old they are now. But Ted has had so much experience in Calvary Chapels and in churches and I think he's told me he's helped ten churches now find buildings. So we're blessed to have him as part of our church.

He said to me a couple months ago, "Hey, I'd like to help you get a building." I said, "Great." I mean the Barn is super. I really like the Barn. This is great. But imagine if we had a building that could use. Wouldn't that be great? I said, "Great, help us get a building." So he says, "Well let's do this. Let's talk to a banker. I've got a Christian banker who helps us with this."

So I sent all the financial information about Calvary Chapel Living Hope to Ted and on to the banker. The banker is a Christian guy and a very gracious guy. He met with us and he basically said well you don't quite have enough money to get a building yet. That's basically the message that he shared with us. So we left that meeting realizing that we've got some work to do at Calvary Chapel Living Hope to continue to grow in order to stabilize ourself as a church. But I'm praying the Lord is going to give us a million dollars. Because if He gives us a million dollars then that will start our building project so we can go forward.

Now I just got to help you understand something though. The million dollars that God might give us... I'm not telling you He's going to give us this. I'm just praying that God would do this because it would open the door for us. Do you know how many buildings are becoming available right now? What a great time to be out there searching for a building because buildings are available. Businesses are closing. There are things that we can obtain now that we may not be able to obtain later. So what a great opportunity we have. I'm excited about that.

But it's not going to happen that some morning I'm going to go online and see what our Wells Fargo bank account is and all of a sudden a million dollars is going to appear there. It just won't. I don't have a direct deposit with God when it comes to our bank account at Wells Fargo. It just doesn't work that way. Here's what God does. God says, "Hmm. I would like to give some money to Calvary Chapel Living Hope, so I'm going to give it through the people that are attached." They get to be the hoses, they get to be the vehicles that are going to bless Calvary Chapel and Calvary Chapel's bank account is going to increase.

So imagine you're in a room, we're all in a meeting here with God. And God is sitting there and He's saying to all of us, "Okay guys, I want to give a million dollars to Calvary Chapel Living Hope. I want to give it to some of you so you can pass it on to Calvary Chapel. That's how I work. And I want to give this money to you in addition to what you already have. I'm not asking you to take your money you already have. What I'm asking you to do is just be available so when I give you some money you'll know it and you'll give it to the church. Would anybody like to be a vehicle to give a million dollars to the church?" How many would say, "Yeah! Put me on the list. I'd be happy to do that." I'm not saying take all the money you have and give it. It's just

God saying I want to give you some extra money you didn't even expect to have and when I give it to you you'll know that that's the money you're to pass on to the church.

Now sometimes God just gives that privilege to one person. They give a million dollars. But many times what He does is He gives it to a lot of people and accumulatively it grows into that amount that the church needs and is blessed with.

See I would suggest that's what God does. God is saying to you, "I'm looking for faithful people. And I would like to give you an abundance, more than you would ever ask or think." When it comes to you, what are you going to do? Are you going to say, "Oh good. I need a bigger bucket." Or are you going to say, "I'm going to be a hose and I'm going to pass that on and allow God to work in the midst of that."

I'm praying for a million dollars. I know where it's going to come from. It's going to come from the people that God has placed that are in connection with us. I have no idea. It seems rather ridiculous, frankly, to pray for a million dollars given the size of our church. But I don't know what God wants to do. But I'll tell you this, if He gives us a million dollars we're going to use it for His kingdom because we want to be this hose to bless a world that's in need and has a tremendous need for the gospel. We want to do that more and more effectively.

Well let's leave the area of money for a moment. Let's take a whole other subject. Because a lot of people are saying, "I'm in a lot of pain. I'm struggling in my life. I've got challenges left and right. I've got troubles." If you've got troubles, God wants to give you something very important. So I'm going to take you to 1 Corinthians. I'm not going to show you the passage, but you can read it on your own. 1 Corinthians 1 because this is a hose passage. It's one of those passages where God is very clear that He's going to give you something to pass on to someone else.

He says that He is the God of compassion and Father of comfort and He comforts us in our troubles so that we can in turn comfort other people with the comfort that we have received. You see the hose in there? God says you're hurting. I understand you're hurting. I'm going to comfort you so much that as you're sitting in your hospital room you can bless all the nurses and the doctors. As you're suffering in your pain that you have, I'm going to give you so much comfort that you bless other people. I'm going to share it with you.

See, that's what God does with us. He wants to give us blessing. He wants to give us so much more than we can ask or think so that we have the ability to be a blessing. And that's what He's saying here in this passage to Abraham. I'm going to bless you so much you are going to be a blessing to other people.

So our job then is to position ourselves well under the shower of God's blessing. How do we get there? Well let's do what Abraham does. It says in the very next verse in verse 4 it says – *So Abram went*. There's a connection between obedience and blessing. Sometimes blessings just come even if you're not obedient. You just got to know that. They just come. It rains on the just and the unjust, the Bible says. Everybody receives some of God's blessing.

But there are some blessings that when we obey God we receive more of them. *So Abram went as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.*

So they're arriving on the scene, which is part of what God's going to do. So they have to get into the right place in order to experience the blessing that God wants to give them. And getting in the right place is going to require change. Change is one of those things that's challenging for us. I've just got to tell you, change is hard. It's 400 miles from Harran down to Shechem. Four hundred miles. That is a long way to walk with Lot and all the possessions and people they've accumulated. There on this entourage moving there. Four hundred miles.

I can tell you how far 400 miles is. It's like going from here to Cleveland. My grandchildren live in Cleveland and I go visit them. I turn on my GPS and I get on the PA Turnpike. Here's what my GPS says. As soon as I get on the PA Turnpike, my GPS says, "Continue for 444 miles." I always laugh when I hear that. Don't get off this road for 444 miles. And then I'm two miles from his house. So I'm not very far from his house. Two miles off the turnpike, a few miles on the turnpike and I'm there. Just the 444 miles in between represent the challenge. I would hate to have to walk all that way. That's what Abraham did. He was committed to the change that was necessary in his life.

God wants to change you. And that change is not easy. You're going, "Oh yeah, but I've got this, I've got that problem." God says I'm going to change you. Change is necessary for you to experience the shower of God's blessing. Just be ready for that. How does God want to change you? He continues to change us so we can position ourselves better in this place of blessing that He wants us to have.

So the passage continues. In verse 6 it says – *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." So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.*

What does Abraham do when he gets to this land and he starts seeing God and hearing from, God? He builds an altar. Essentially what he's doing is he's planting a flag. He's putting all these stones together and that's going to be a marker that's going to say this is where God spoke to me. This is where I heard the Lord. This is where God said He's going to bless me. And then he goes on to another place. He's planting the flag continually in his life.

Notice it says – *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 (there's another altar to the Lord) and called on the name of the Lord. Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev. So he's travelling around and he's planting the flag in all of these places.*

I just want to encourage you, when God gives you something, plant the flag. If He gives you a new house, plant the flag. This is God's house. He gives you a car, you want to say, "This is

God's car," and you plant the flag. "I want to use this for the Lord." If He gives you a paycheck, you say, "This is God's money." If He gives you a bonus, you say, "This is God's money." You know everything that you do you're saying, "This is the opportunity that God has given to me." Every morning we get up and we have this altar before the Lord and we say, "Today God, this is your day. I give this day to you. I plant the flag for you today on this day. It is your day. Use me, Lord, in what you want to do today." So that's what Abraham's doing. He's going through the land and he's planting the flag for the Lord.

Now in case you misunderstand me here, when I talk about the gifts that God gives and the blessing that He wants you to have more of, I don't want you to think that everything then is going to be rosy, everything is going to be fine. So I'm going to take you one verse into next week. Next week's message will take us into the next verses. I just want you to read verse 10. Notice it says in verse 10 – *Now there was a famine in the land*. You're going, "Whoa, wait a minute! I thought he was being blessed." You've got to understand we live in a world that's broken. We as believers experience pain and challenges in our lives, just like other people experience pain and challenges in their lives. There are certain decisions that we make and choices that we make that free us up from some of the pain that other people experience because we're following the Lord and His directives. But that doesn't mean that we escape all of the pain in the world. You're going to have challenges, you're going to have struggles, relational struggles, health struggles, financial struggles. You're going to experience those.

Famine in the land? This is the Promised Land. This is the land God promised him. He's planting flags. There's a famine in the land, he's going to have to leave the land? You see you just have to understand that the blessing of the Lord is not all about everything going well. It's about God giving you gifts that are appropriate in that moment. And sometimes the gifts that God gives you are those gifts of encouragement, those gifts of comfort. The blessings that He gives to you are the ones that are hope. Those ones of encouragement that God wants you to have inside of your heart. That's what we're going to see in this passage.

Abraham is this guy, this man of faith and that's why I want to take you to Hebrews 11 which also mentions him in this passage. It says – *By faith Abraham*. You see faith is this opportunity for us to leave what we're doing and to go on and not know everything. Just notice what it says here. *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and he went without knowing where he was going*. There is some unknown about trusting the Lord. That's what faith is all about. This adventure of going, "Okay, I'm not quite sure where I'm going here, but I believe this is where God is leading me." That's what's happening here.

And then there's going to be a point made in this sermon about the fact that he pitched his tent. It's about his tent. Look at the point being made there because I think there's an application for our lives there as well. He says – *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. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God*. There's a temporary nature about tents and there's a permanent nature about the house yet to come. And he's saying, "Okay. I recognize that I'm living in this temporary place. I'm only pitching a tent here. God has a bigger building planned for me." We can all look

forward to that fact that heaven is awaiting. It is the foundation, this building with a foundation that's much different than the tents we experience now in our lives.

Well that's three different sermons preached about Abraham and I'm preaching a sermon about Abraham. I think we can learn some valuable things about Abraham.

I want to take you back to the same place we started today in Ephesians 1. I want to show you one more verse. Because Paul is saying you guys have been blessed. God has chosen you. But I don't think you get it, he says. So he says this: *I pray*. I think this is the prayer we all need to pray for ourselves. *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.* The eyes of your heart be opened to see the blessings, to recognize the grace that God has given to you so that you can count your blessings, you can enjoy them.

God wants to bless you more. He wants to bless all of us more. We do some things in order to prepare ourselves for that blessing. I encourage you to listen to the Lord because the Holy Spirit will speak to you. And say this is what I need to do in my life. This is what God wants me to do. This is how I need to follow. This is what I need to give up. Here's where I need to go and I don't fully understand. Here's where I need to have faith. All of these markers that are in these passages position us well under the blessing of God that God wants to shower on us. It's just waiting for us to go forward.

Would you stand with me. Let's pray together and then we'll sing some more worship.

[PRAYER] Lord, thank you for your grace, for your blessings. At a time of thanksgiving, Lord, we are reminded to just think of the things we're grateful for. We have so many things to thank you for, and we do now. Thank you for those things. But we know you have more for us, so we ask that you'd show us what it means to position ourselves well under your blessing so that we can experience that in powerful ways. Lord, speak to our hearts now in a very intimate way. Show us what you want to do and teach us. In Jesus' name, amen.