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GENESIS 23

Series: Understanding Your Roots

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[PRAYER] ...people who are really struggling today in their lives. We've got health concerns, we've got challenges with people at work, we've got relational problems that people are experiencing. So Lord, we need your grace. Grace for today, grace for this week, grace for the future. So Lord, we know that coming to you is what we need to do. Increase our willingness to pray and to approach you. Lord, I pray for a special measure of that grace in the hearts and lives of the people that are listening online and here at the Barn. That you would bless them with that grace so that they can endure and persevere through the challenges that they're experiencing and at the same time experience the joy and the peace that you designed in the midst of the struggle. So Lord, I'm just grateful that we can do that together. That we can share our prayer concerns, we can share our lives and enjoy those relationships. I'm grateful for the conversations I've had this week with folks here at church. I pray that you would encourage us all the more because we're walking this path together. Father, now as we open your word we ask for that grace to illuminate the scriptures so that we can see that, so we can understand what they have for us, we can appreciate all the more what you're doing in our hearts and lives. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

If you were to travel to Israel today there would be a list of things you would want to visit and see. If you're Jewish the number one visiting place would be the Wailing Wall, which is that wall of the leftover of the old Temple that's still there. People will take their prayer requests and they'll write them on pieces of paper and then they'll stuff them in and around the bricks. So all of these blocks have cracks in them and they're putting their prayers in there.

If you were Jewish the second most visited place would be the grave of Abraham. Because he is the father of the Jewish nation. So that is in what is called the Cave of Machpelah down south of Jerusalem. South is Bethlehem and then below that is Hebron and it's in that Hebron area. Today that cave has a temple or a church built over it. It was built during the time of Herod way back in the first century and it's a remarkable building that's still left. If you go inside the building there's these two stairways that you can go down and you can see the caves. They've done some archeological digs around there to verify that these were the genuine places of that period. So they're pretty certain these were the actual graves of where Abraham and Sarah, his wife, were buried, where Isaac, their son, and his wife were buried, and where Jacob, their son, and his wife Leah were buried. Now today we're going to learn about the history of this story, where it all started – Machpelah and how it came to be into the possession of Abraham.

We're going to look at Genesis 23 today. As we do we're going to see that Sarah is the first one of those six people who dies and Abraham is going to obtain this place to bury her. So our passage today is somewhat funeral like. In other words we're going to look at the death of Sarah and how that impacted Abraham. As we do look at that we're going to ponder our own lives. In fact look at this verse from God's word that says this: *It is better to go to a house of mourning* (that is a funeral)... This is in Ecclesiastes 7:2. *It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting* (whether that's a party or a wedding or something like that), *for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.*

So visiting a funeral or going to a funeral is a significant event. It's a time for pondering, it's a time for thinking. It affects us and we should take it to heart. Actually the statistics are rather conclusive. We look at the statistics today we see that 10 out of 10 people die. So we know that we are all facing that challenge unless the Lord comes back again before then. If you're married it's likely one of you is going to go before the other, so you may even lose your spouse before that. So it's something of us to consider in the midst of all of this experience.

I have three goals for us in our sermon today. As we look at the death of Sarah and Abraham's handling that and the burying of her and so on, I'd like us to recognize that we are sojourners in this world. We're just passing through. Secondly, I would like for you to go away feeling the impact of today. That today is a valuable day and you can rejoice today because this is the day the Lord made and you get to enjoy it. Today is valuable. You don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, but today you can enjoy. And thirdly, to value those you love. Because you don't know how long they're going to be around and how much you're going to be able to spend time with them. So valuing your loved ones is my third goal that you would have today as we look at this passage.

So I'm eager to go into Genesis 23. You can open your Bibles if you would to Genesis 23 and let's take it verse by verse through the passage and understand what God might be saying to us today.

It starts this way: *Sarah lived 127 years.* Do you know this is the only woman in the Bible that God tells how old she is? Maybe that's because the Holy Spirit is a gentleman and we know that women don't like to talk about their age very much.

I laugh when the little boy gets on the bus and the bus driver says, "And young man, how old are you?" And he says, "I'm five and my mom is 47," and she's going, "Ah!" Don't want to tell my age.

One woman asked a man, "How old do you think I am?" Now that's really a dangerous question. He pauses and he thinks and he says, "Well I'm tempted to say you're ten years younger than I think because you're so beautiful or ten years older than I think because you're so wise." Sounds like a good answer to give. I appreciate that.

Sarah it says she was 127 years old when she died. Somehow God did something in Sarah's body, I don't know what it was, but in her eighties remember she was with Abraham when they went down to Egypt. The king of Egypt says I want her to be my wife. So she was a beautiful

woman in her eighties. In her eighties she appeared to be something like (well I better be careful here) a woman of the perfect age. She's this beautiful woman at that age. God did something to preserve her in some great ways. Amazing. But it wasn't just her age that we see recorded in God's word. She's placed as a model in 1 Peter 3 as a wife to consider Sarah. So she was quite a woman, this wife of the patriarch Abraham. So she's emulated and now she's died.

It says – *Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.* One hundred twenty-seven years seems like a long time to me. But such a short time to be able to live on earth like that.

It says in verse 2 that *Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.* This was like their can I say their honeymoon cottage place? I mean you see them visiting Hebron a lot. It's at Hebron where the two angels and God come to them and announce that they're going to have a baby next year. I'm sure a lot of memories there. It was the place where Abraham was living that he heard that Lot and his family had been taken away by the kings. So he gathers the forces in his own family and his own entourage, plus those around, and then went and they recaptured them. That's where he was living at the time. So now Abraham has obviously returned to this place and this was where Sarah dies in this special place that they loved and enjoyed in their lives.

It says – *and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.* I like it that it says that Abraham wept for her. Sometimes as guys we don't like to cry. But here we have a passage where here's a guy, the patriarch Abraham himself cries at the loss of his wife. We also read in the scriptures that Jesus wept. So this idea of crying is a valuable thing I think in our whole process of grieving that helps us to be able to grieve more effectively and often helps us to deal with some of our stuff. You know you just cry it out and you're able to allow that emotional catharsis through crying. It can be a very valuable thing.

And what is it in this kind of a situation that feeds the tears? It's the memories, isn't it? It's those memories come back and you just enjoy the memories so much. I wonder if Abraham was thinking back on when he married Sarah so many years ago and just saw the sunlight glistening off her hair and the beauty of that special celebration that they had. Or when God called them out of Ur and together as partners they left there and went off on their adventure to follow the Lord. Or maybe the time when they were sitting there with their baby Isaac for the first time just enjoying him, the baby of the promise, and just enjoying God's grace in their lives. God had taken them to so many different places in their lives and in their experiences and they're just enjoying the memories of all of those things. And those memories are just feeding this sense of crying and just grieving.

It says – *He went in to mourn for Sarah.* Probably in those days they had a little tent that they created for the person after the person had passed away. They would be in a tent for a little while to protect them from the sun before they buried the person. This is that time when Abraham could go in and he was enjoying the memories.

You know when you grieve over the loss of someone, the grieving is a process of separating the presence of that person from you from the memories that you have that will stay with you

forever. As I thought about this, losing your spouse, I don't have a lot of experience in that area. It's not something I've experienced. My wife and I, Carrie and I, have been married for almost 43 years and we love each other very much. We've had a great marriage. I can tell you a lot about that, how to have a great marriage, and about the enjoyment of marriage and how great it is to have a partner in life that you can go through life with. But losing a spouse, I have no idea. I can imagine it would be really painful.

So this week I wanted to talk to someone who's a little ahead of me in the journey in this regard. So I called up Debra Miller. You know Debra Miller I suppose. If you're online you certainly know Debra because she's on there every week. Debra lives in North Carolina. She's been attending our church now virtually for months. Actually just a month or so ago she said she had rededicated her life to Jesus Christ because she's listened to the sermons and been a part of our church. She connects regularly and she was sharing even after her husband passed away late last year, she was sharing with her challenge with grieving. Debra's husband's name is Charlie.

When it became clear that Charlie was dying, I talked to both Charlie and Debra. I asked him, "Are you a Christian?" and he said, "Yes. I've accepted Christ into my life." I went down there to North Carolina and did the funeral for them and spent some time with them down there for that brief time during the funeral.

But afterwards Debra was having some real challenges in this grieving area. It was hard for her. She was part of our small group on Wednesday night interacting. As she's struggling, one of the suggestions we made to her was find a church down there that has a GriefShare group. I would recommend that you also, if you're grieving, you get involved in a GriefShare group that some church is running. This is a Christian group that helps you understand more about what grieving is and how to grieve well. So Debra did that. She's been sharing with me some of the things she's learning.

She sent me this. This is a page out of the GriefShare book that she appreciated. Notice it says Day 5. Let me just read out of Day 5. It says this: "When people try to rush you, don't let people rush you past the pain. They are not the authority on your grief." So she's learning all kinds of things.

So I called her this week and I said, "Debra, what are you learning in your GriefShare?" "Oh I'm learning so much," she says. "Everyone grieves in their own way. Everyone grieves at their own speed. I'll be grieving for the rest of my life and I need to accept that it's part of who I am and that's okay." She and Charlie had been married for years. I think it's something like thirty years they've been married. She says, "I never know when it's going to come on me. The other day I was in Walmart and I started crying in the grocery aisle because I was trying to buy some rice and I couldn't remember what kind of rice we buy. I knew if I called Charlie he'd tell me what kind of rice, but he wasn't there." So she just cried right there in the grocery aisle.

She said sometimes she's out doing the chores that Charlie used to do and she feels a little angry. "Charlie, you should be here doing these chores. How come I got to be doing these chores?" So she continues to process this with the Lord and allow God to work in her life.

The memories that she has are sweet. One of the things she says over and over again is this (in her southern accent): “You can’t do this without the Lord. You’ve got to have the Lord in your life,” she says. I just appreciate that.

I asked her this question: “Do you think, Debra, that the tears of a Christian are different than the tears of a non-Christian when they lose someone special?”

“Oh yes,” she says. “I don’t know how anybody could do this without the Lord. You need the Lord in your life. Because I know I’m going to see Charlie again someday.”

That’s what Paul says to the believers in 1 Thessalonians 4:13. Let me read it to you. It says this: *Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.* When you know the Lord, as Debra says it, it gives you a different perspective of life, a different perspective of death, and you know things that other people don’t know. It’s just this treasure that you enjoy.

So now I’m starting to imagine a little bit more about Abraham’s experience in how he was addressing this and understanding how Abraham would experience the death and the loss of his soulmate, his wife. I know the challenge of Isaac, that was a big challenge going up the mountain. But this must have been equally as challenging to lose his partner in life.

Verse 3 says – *And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites...* This idea of rose up means he squared his shoulders and he started going forward. This idea that here he is weeping, but he knows he needs to do something now. He’s going to continue to grieve, but he’s got to go forward. He knows he has to move forward in life. So he goes out and does what he’s going to do.

Debra said this to me this week, “You know there’s a point in your grieving when you realize you’ve got to go on. You’ve got to move forward. They told us the story about Moses dying and Joshua taking his place.” If you read in Joshua 1 apparently he was a little reluctant to take leadership. So God says to him, “Be strong and courageous.” And then He says in a few verses later, “Be strong and courageous.” In other words, come on buddy, get up and go do the job you need to do. That you’re carrying on the legacy that Moses has given to us. All that teaching. These people need a leader. Debra says in her life God has said to her, “I need to go forward. I need to take all the things that Charlie did and what he stood for and I need to help other people understand those things.” There’s this moving forward that takes place and Abraham realizes this now in this moment in his life. Okay, I need to go forward. I need to go to the next step.

So it says he *rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites* (those are the people that lived in that area), *“I am a sojourner and foreigner among you.”* Remember that’s one of the things I suggested that you’ll come away from this sermon with. Is these same words that Abraham said to the people in the community. *I’m just a sojourner and a foreigner among you.*

It’s interesting that he would say that when God had said to him, “Look around, Abraham, all this land is yours. This is the promised land. I’m taking you to this special place. You own all of this.” But Abraham’s idea about life is that he was a sojourner. He was a traveler. We need to have that kind of an attitude. You’ll know when your talons are gripping some of the worldly

things, the earthly things too much because the emotions will start to creep in. You'll start becoming anxious more, angry more, depressed more. Because well we have our hands and our feet and our minds on earthly things. That verse in Colossians that I love that says *set your minds on things above, not on earthly things*. We continually need to do that. Some people you hear them say "he's so heavenly minded, he's no earthly good." Have you heard that kind of a statement? Well I would suggest if you're not heavenly minded, you are no earthly good. That we really need to have our minds set in heaven and that God is directing us in a way that is powerful. We have to recognize that we are just sojourners, like Abraham. I'm just a sojourner here. I'm just among you.

And now he goes into his request. *"Give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."* *The Hittites answered Abraham, "Hear us, my lord; you are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead."* You're a prince of God. Even they recognized that he had this relationship with God. And they say you can have whatever you want. We'll give you whatever tomb you want to bury your wife in, you go ahead and do that. We'll allow you to do that.

Well let's see what Abraham's response is to that. *He bowed down to the Hittites, the people of the land. And he said to them, "If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and entreat for me Ephron the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as property for a burying place."* So Abraham says, "Okay, if I get to pick where I'm going to bury my wife, I want that place. I would like to ask that I could buy that place, the Cave of Machpelah which is at the end of this big field. That's what I want."

Well let's go and see what happens now as they interact. Then I'm going to explain to you a little bit more about this process of negotiation and how if you understand the culture of the situation here, it will make a little bit more colorful what's happening in this Jewish negotiation. Because God recounts in this chapter the intricate parts of the negotiation back and forth. Very interesting. Probably because this is now documented so that everyone else can see that this cave belongs to Abraham.

Well let's read on and see what he says. *Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites, and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city.* The gates of the city was the place where people would often conduct their business. So now you have to see it's made a point several times that negotiation is taking place in front of a bunch of people. Basically this is going on public record. It's as we would sign a deed or have something certified and logged into the public record, this is what's happening here. It's in the public record. So he says, *"No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it."* So he's saying I'm not just giving you the cave, I'll give you the field as well. *"In the sight of the sons of my people I give it to you. Bury your dead."* Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land. And he said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, *"But if you will, hear me: I give the price of the field. Accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there."* Ephron answered Abraham, *"My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead."*

Let's go on and read the next part. It says – *Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants.*

So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it and all the trees that were in the field, throughout its whole area, was made over to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city. That's public record here. After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah east of Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.

So here we have this negotiation that's taking place between Abraham and Ephron. It makes a lot more sense when you understand the Jewish negotiation process.

My wife and I when we were in our early twenties went to Israel to experience Israel and to enjoy it. We went for twenty-one days and we didn't go on a tour and we didn't have the internet in those days. So we had tour books that we had that we would be looking at. We got on a plane and flew and landed in Tel Aviv and were totally on our own. If you want food, you've got to go find food. If you want money to exchange and so on. So we had all these kind of... Well it was an adventure for us going through. It was just an amazing experience. If you ever have an opportunity to go to Israel, I would encourage you to do it.

We sat on the side of the Sea of Galilee. As we did there were families playing and a little boy yells out to his dad, "Abba! Abba!" And I'm going, "Whoa! Did you hear that?" It's all in Hebrew of course. They're not speaking English. And I'm going oh I know that word from my study of the Bible. He's calling his daddy out there, just like Jesus called Him Abba Father.

A man at the Sea of Galilee offered to take us out fishing all night in his fishing boat. I thought oh what a privilege that would be. We couldn't do it because we were kind of on a schedule. We had to get over to Mount Carmel to see all the things that were going on that we remember from our Bible study and see that part of things.

But my favorite time, my favorite thing in Israel was going to the Old City of Jerusalem. The Old City. This is where they dug up and unearthed the actual stones, stone path that Jesus would have walked on on His way to the cross. They call it the Via Dolorosa. You walk along that path. But now it has all of these booths. In fact I looked up on the internet this week just to remind myself – 800 different booths. We're talking about all these windy little streets that are very narrow and these booths on them. And you walk through there to shop. I just thought what a fascinating experience. When you walk in there, the smells and the noise, it's just a very unique experience.

As you walk in there the people from their booths, they stand up and they call out to you, "Oh come in here! Oh where are you from? Are you from America?" "Oh yes, I'm from America." "Oh! From California? From New York City? Come in, we have everything you want." And then a man comes up to you as you're walking down and he says, "What do you need? I can find

it anywhere for you. I will take you there and you can buy it.” So we were wandering through looking at the different things.

At one point I realized that one thing I wanted to buy was a nativity set that is hand carved out of olive wood. So I wanted one of those. We bought it and we bring it every Christmas and decorate with it when we have our celebration at the church. So I wanted one of those.

So as I was looking you know you look at something and you start looking at it and here’s what the person in the shop will say. “Oh you like that? I give it to you. You can have it.” Just like this guy Ephron says. “Oh you want that cave? Okay, I’ll give it to you. And I’ll give you the field next to it too.” So the guy says to us as we’re going through, “Oh you like that? I give it to you. And here I have this blanket. I give you this blanket too.” You know that’s not what’s going to happen. So you say to him...because if you start walking away with it you know you’re going to be in trouble. So you say, “Okay how much is it?” “Oh for you New York City, for you 400 shekels. We give it to you for 400 shekels.” I go whoa that’s like 80 bucks. Eighty bucks for this thing? That’s a lot of money. I think I can do better than that. I say, “Well thank you very much,” and you really have to walk away from these people in order to get away from these people you have to walk away.

So I’m walking away, he says, “Oh look, for New York City, I give it to you for 200 shekels.” I go whoa. We just went from 400 to 200. That was fast! I go, “Wait a minute. How about it I take it for 100. Is that okay?” “Oh you’re killing me,” he says. He’s like in mourning like a martyr. “Oh I have to run a business here. You can’t do this to me. But for you I give it to you for 150.” I’m going wow this is amazing. So we buy it and then I’m going down to the different place and I see here it is for 75. But the point is there’s this negotiation that goes back and forth between them. When I look at this story I’m going that is just the way it is when you go to the Old City of Jerusalem.

Ephron says, “Oh I give it to you with this blanket as well. Or this field. You can have it all.” Abraham says, “No, I don’t want it for free.”

Let me just say to you, especially you young people, there is nothing for free. Okay? Those of us who have been around for a while, we know. Sometimes we say it this way: There is no free lunch. If a businessman wants to take you out for lunch, you know it’s not free. There’s some obligation involved. Now as brothers and sisters we take each other out for lunch and dinner and there is this obligation. Because the Bible says don’t have any obligation or anybody anything except love. So we do have an obligation to each other. So we’ll pay for each other’s meals. But in this case I’m talking about the businessman who says oh I’m going to give you something for free. Or maybe even you get the envelope... I don’t know if you get these envelopes. I get the envelope and on the outside it says “you’ve been approved \$5,000 free.” I’m going oh great. You open that up. Well you’ve just got to know, young people, that is such a trap. They’re going to give you \$5,000. You’re going oh great, \$5,000 interest free for a year. But then the interest kicks in at 19% and you’re in debt for years trying to get out of that servant kind of dilemma. No free here.

And so Abraham says I don't want free. So Ephron says, "Okay, what's 400 shekels between you and me." Just the dialogue is fascinating to me. What does Abraham do? He pulls out his checkbook and he says, "Okay. I'll pay 400." In fact verse 9 if you see it in verse 9 he says Abraham wanted to pay the full price that was being asked. Why is he doing that? He's paying the full price because he doesn't want an obligation. He doesn't want anybody to come back and say, "Well I did this for you, so you do this to me." I want the whole thing. I don't want any obligation between us. I'm paying for this whole thing up front. So Abraham goes and he pays for this whole field.

Just a fascinating story as we see the interaction between them. You know Abraham went from just this sense of weeping to this place of negotiating the tomb and burying his wife. I'm just so impressed by the heart of Abraham. You know as he cried there in that tent with his wife and tried to grieve over that whole experience, I'm sure that he himself experienced the grace of God. That's what God does in our lives.

You know one of the beautiful things we have is this relationship with the Lord that we can enjoy. In Psalm 56 it says that God takes our tears and puts them in a bottle. What the psalmist is meaning in that picturesque language is that God cares about our pain. That every time we cry that's important to Him. Yes, it's true that when we get to heaven it says in Revelation there's no more tears. But right now there's a lot of tears in our lives. When you're sad and when you're upset it's okay to cry. It's okay to recognize that you're suffering and you're in pain. God cares for you in a very intimate way and wants to do that. That's why He sent the Holy Spirit. Remember Jesus says I'm going away and when I go away I'm going to send to you the Comforter, the one who comes alongside of you to guide you and help you and love you. That is so important. We all need the comfort of God in our lives. We all need to learn how to grieve.

I would suggest if you're stuck because you're disappointed with something in life (you've lost someone) that you really need, I'd go to this GriefShare group if there's one around here. Find one and get involved in it. Understand how God is working in your heart to bring about this place of peace in your life.

As we work with children we teach them how to grieve. Do you know that. Do you know that? That's why we say no to kids. When you say no to a child, every time you do they have to grieve over something. They have to grieve the loss that they can't have that cookie right now. So you'll see it. You've probably heard of the five stages of grief. Right? We see a pattern that often takes place in people's lives.

You see it in children when you say to your teenager, "No, you can't go to that party. The first stage of grief is denial. "What? Everybody lets their kids go to a party. What's the problem? I can't believe you're doing this to me." It's denial. That's the first thing you're going to see in a child. The second stage of grief is anger. "I can't believe this. This is so wrong of you. Oh I hate being in this family. This is the strictest family in the world." The third stage of grief is bargaining. You can imagine a teenager – "I'll tell you what, mom. Let me go to the party and I'll do all the chores for the whole month in advance," or whatever they'll say. They're bargaining. Next comes depression and they go moping around because they can't get what they want. So they come to this place of acceptance.

That's why we say no to children when they're young so they can practice grieving to prepare them for the big situations in our lives when we have to grieve over the loss of a job or the loss of money or the loss of a car or loss of a relationship or the loss of a loved one. We need to know how to grieve. It's not an easy thing to do.

There are some movements among child-rearing or in preschool that says we don't say no to kids. We just tell them something else they can do instead. So they don't say no to children at all. The child says, "Can I have this?" You say, "Well let's do this instead." Okay? I just think that's dangerous. I'm not saying that distracting children is a bad idea. But if you never say no to a child, they don't get to deal with the pressure that goes on inside of your heart.

Now I just want to suggest that each of us must have a plan for dealing with disappointment in our lives. We all, whether it's a small disappointment or a large disappointment must have a plan for dealing with that in our hearts and lives. That prepares us to grieve over even the most difficult experiences that we might face in our hearts and lives.

Let me take you to one more passage in closing. This is the passage in Hebrews. We keep going back to Hebrews because in Hebrews 11 God has this hall of faith we call it where the patriarchs are remembered and we have information about them there. It says – *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. 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.*

That's what we're looking forward to. We're looking forward to this heaven because we are just passing through. You see when we recognize we're just passing through this place, we don't get locked in to so many things that are going on in an earthly plane. We're able to look to the foundations of this city that God has prepared for us whose architect and builder is God. Abraham modeled that. That's what we need in our lives. Which I think helps us be able to enjoy today. We look at today and we say yes. Today is a great day. You never know what's going to happen tomorrow, so we want to enjoy today.

It's been said that yesterday is the past, tomorrow is the future, today is a gift. That's why they call it the present. We need to recognize that today is a gift for us that we can enjoy. That you can look out today and you can say, "Yes, I appreciate that the things that are happening today. I don't have to wait for my happiness till tomorrow or when this thing comes down the path. Today is the day the Lord has made." I would encourage you as you look at this story from Abraham and the passing of his wife that you would go out and show love to those people that you appreciate and value. Friends and family that are important to you. You never know what will happen tomorrow. Value them. They are important. You see when you understand that we're just passing through, it reminds us of the value of being a Christian.

If you haven't accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I just want to tell you it opens up tremendous...it's like Debra says – I don't know how you can do this without the Lord in your

life. And I agree with Debra what she's saying that the Lord really gives us the ability to process life, to understand life. God wants to do that great work in your life. If you've never accepted Christ, I encourage you to do that today. Invite Him into your heart, let Him run your life, let Him control you, and He will direct your paths in a way that are just strategic. Yes, you will experience trials. You will experience disappointment. You'll experience bad things. But you'll process them differently because you're just a sojourner here and your eyes are focused on the architect and builder who is God.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Father, we do thank you for the perspective that we can have on life and death because of our relationship with you. Lord, I pray for those who are struggling now in their challenges with grieving – grieving over the loss of a loved one or grieving over some other form of loss. That you would comfort them and demonstrate your grace in a powerful way. Lord, we pray that you would give us the ability to move forward in our lives and to live life to the fullest because we know who you are. So Lord, as we listen to the rain here at the Barn we just thank you for the blessings that you rain down on our lives. We ask you to continue to do that. We look forward to what you're going to do this week. I especially pray for Debra, Lord, as you help her in her healing, that you continue to grow her in her life and her focus on you. In Jesus' name, amen.