

**Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church**  
**Reading Together**  
**The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus**

**January 16 – Genesis 12: 1 – 3; 17: 1 - 8**

In our first reading, God makes a magnificent promise to Abraham, and then in the second reading, God reaffirms the promise. It is a four prong promise that involves remarkable blessings for Abraham and his offspring. God promises to give Abraham the land of Canaan as an inheritance for his family, and God also promises that Abraham will be the father of not just one nation, but many nations (12:5), and that kings will come from him (17:6). There is a third prong to the promise that God has made to Abraham, that all nations of the world will be blessed through the offspring of Abraham. And, finally the fourth, and maybe most important prong that this would be: *“an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. (Genesis 17: 7).*

Now let’s think about how God fulfilled these promises to Abraham. Abraham got to tour the land of Canaan (chapter 12: 4-9), but he never really got to settle there. In fact, it would be 400 years before his descendants would settle there after Moses brought them out of Egypt. But the land that God promised to Abraham would become the home of the Israelites and be known as the Promised Land (because of the promise God had made to Abraham).

The second promise God made to Abraham was that he would become the father of many nations. As you read the history in the Bible, we see that in an effort to fulfill the promise God had made to Abraham, Abraham slept with his wife’s handmaiden, Hagar, (Genesis 16), and she bore him a son named Ishmael who became the father of the Arab nations. But God was just waiting for the right time to fulfill his promise to Abraham and when Abraham and his wife Sarah were almost 100 years old, God gave them a son, Isaac, who became the father of the Israelites. But even further down the road, out of the nation of Israel, would come Jesus. Jesus would usher in a new Kingdom (nation), the Kingdom of Heaven. Through Jesus, God fulfilled the third promise he made to Abraham. Through Jesus, all nations of the world would be blessed, and it would be through Jesus that we would be able to have an eternal relationship with God.

One of the remarkable things about these promises is that Abraham never really got to see these promises fully fulfilled. He only got little glimpses.

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**Hebrews 11:8-16** *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. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. <sup>11</sup> By faith Abraham, even though he was past age-- and Sarah herself was barren-- was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. <sup>12</sup> And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. <sup>13</sup> All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. <sup>14</sup> People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> Instead, they were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

Even though Abraham never got to see these promises fulfilled completely he walked by faith and trusted God, and God counted Abraham righteous because of his faith.

**Romans 4:16-25** *So that's why faith is the key! God's promise is given to us as a free gift. And we are certain to receive it, whether or not we follow Jewish customs, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. <sup>17</sup> That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who brings into existence what didn't exist before. <sup>18</sup> When God promised Abraham that he would become the father of many nations, Abraham believed him. God had also said, "Your descendants will be as numerous as the stars," even though such a promise seemed utterly impossible! <sup>19</sup> And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though he knew that he was too old to be a father at the age of one hundred and that Sarah, his wife, had never been able to have children. <sup>20</sup> Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. <sup>21</sup> He was absolutely convinced that God was able to do anything he promised. <sup>22</sup> And because of Abraham's faith, God declared him to be righteous. <sup>23</sup> Now this wonderful truth-- that God declared him to be righteous-- wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. <sup>24</sup> It was for us, too, assuring us that God will also declare us to be righteous if we believe in God, who brought Jesus our Lord back from the dead. <sup>25</sup> He was handed over to die*

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*because of our sins, and he was raised from the dead to make us right with God.*

**January 17 – Genesis 14: 11 – 20**

Who is this Melchizedek that we read about today and what does he have to do with Jesus? That's a good question and the answer is everything! At the very least Melchizedek is a picture of Jesus. Psalm 110 is known as a Messianic Psalm meaning that the Psalm contains a prophecy about Jesus.

**Psalm 110:1-5** *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." <sup>2</sup> The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. <sup>3</sup> Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth. <sup>4</sup> The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." <sup>5</sup> The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.*

We will look at Psalm 110 later on in our study, but right now we just need to see that this Psalm pictures the Messiah, Jesus, as both a great king and a great priest, which is exactly what Jesus is. Think about what our reading in Genesis told us about Melchizedek—he was both a priest and a king, and he was of such greatness that Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of the plunder he seized in his battle, as a tribute. You only pay tribute to one who is greater than you are. As great as Abraham was, Melchizedek was greater.

In addition, Abraham also received a blessing from Melchizedek, and it is always the greater person who blesses a lesser person. Do you begin to see how Melchizedek, as both priest and king, is a picture of Jesus as our priest and king? The writer of Hebrews makes this connection very well for us. In speaking about Jesus as our priest and king, the writer of Hebrews references Melchizedek by quoting from Psalm 110 and saying this:

**Hebrews 5:6-10** *And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." <sup>7</sup> During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. <sup>8</sup> Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered <sup>9</sup> and, once made*

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*perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him <sup>10</sup> and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.*

**Hebrews 6:19 - 7:3** *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, <sup>20</sup> where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. <sup>NIV</sup> **Hebrews 7:1** This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, <sup>2</sup> and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." <sup>3</sup> Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.*

In Old Testament Israel, the office of priest and king were always separate, a man could not serve as both. But before Israel, there was Melchizedek, a man who was both priest and king. Some scholars say that Melchizedek was a theophany—an Old Testament manifestation of Christ. At the very least, he is an Old Testament picture of Christ, one who is great enough to be both priest and king.

Jesus is our “king of righteousness” and our “king of peace.” His sacrifice for us on the cross gives us righteousness and brings us peace with God. He is our high priest who gives us access to the very throne room of heaven. Our hope is found in Christ alone. The hope we have in Christ is the anchor for our soul.

**January 18 – Genesis 15: 1 – 6**

Verse 6 is such an important verse for us to remember, “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Everything Abraham did was based on faith in God to keep the promises God had made to Abraham. Even though Abraham had doubts, he kept moving forward trusting God. As you read this passage you can’t help but see that Abraham is starting to have doubts about the promises God has made to him. As he and Sarah grow older they are beginning to wonder how God can keep his word. So, God reaffirms the promise that he had made to Abraham. God blessed Abraham because Abraham believed God, but more importantly God has blessed us though Abraham.

**Galatians 3:5-9** *Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? <sup>6</sup>*

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*Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." <sup>7</sup> Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." <sup>9</sup> So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

All of the blessings we have in Christ come by way of faith—faith that God will save us from our sin if we believe and trust in the promises God has made. Those promises are sealed with the blood of Christ. It is through Christ's blood that the promises God made to Abraham would ultimately be fulfilled, because it is through Christ's blood that we become heirs to the promises God has made.

**Galatians 3:13-14** *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." <sup>14</sup> He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

So often we make the mistake of thinking that our lives are about what we do or don't do and we forget about the importance of faith.

**Hebrews 11:6** *without faith it is impossible to please God*

God is only pleased with our lives when we live in faith and trust his promises. If we are doing that then, like Abraham, we will do the right thing as well. First comes faith and then our actions follow as a result of that faith.

**January 19 – Genesis 15: 7 – 21**

As we observed yesterday, you can't help but see that Abraham is starting to have doubts about the promises God has made to him. As he and Sarah grow older, they are beginning to wonder how God can keep his word. So, God reaffirms the promise that he had made to Abraham. As the writer of Hebrews puts it, there was nothing greater for God to swear an oath by, so he swore an oath by himself.

**Hebrews 6:13-14** <sup>3</sup> *When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, <sup>14</sup> saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants."*

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That is what God was doing in the ceremony that takes place in this passage. He was swearing an oath by his name. To understand this, we have to understand the world that Abraham lived in. What God did in this passage was a very common way for men to swear an oath in Abraham's day. They would cut animals in half and then walk between the pieces of the animals. By doing this they were saying, "May I be torn in two, just as these animals are, if I do not keep my word to you."

In verses 13 – 16, after Abraham arranges the pieces of the animals on the ground, God reaffirms the promises he has made to Abraham—promises to give him a land of his own and a family to live in that land. In fact, God not only re-affirms the promise, he also tells Abraham how future events will unfold. Abraham's descendants will be strangers in a land that is not their own, and then they will become enslaved in that land for 400 years, but then they will come out of that land with great possessions. As we look back at history, we can see clearly the events that God was talking about. God was speaking about the time between Joseph and Moses, when Abraham's descendants (Israel) would go to Egypt first as honored guests but then as slaves. After 400 hundred years of slavery in Egypt, Moses would bring them out in the Exodus and they would come and settle in the land that God had promised to Abraham.

Now notice what it is that walks between the pieces of the animals. Was it Abraham? No, it was something (someone) else. Verse 17 tells us that it was a smoking pot and a blazing torch that walked between the pieces. Do you remember how God accompanied the Israelites on their exit out of Egypt? It was a pillar of fire by night, and a cloud of smoke by day. The smoking pot and the blazing torch that walked between the pieces of animals that Abraham had laid out on the ground were representing God walking through cut up animals, and God saying, "If I don't keep my promise to you Abraham, then may I be torn in two just as these animals are cut in two."

Eventually, in order for God to keep his promise for Abraham to truly become a great nation and for all peoples of the earth to be blessed through Abraham's offspring, God, in the person of Jesus Christ, would have to be "torn in two" on the cross, so that we could be made with God.

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**January 20 – Genesis 22: 1 – 18**

Imagine waiting your whole life, 99 years, for a son, the son through which all of the promises God had made to you would be fulfilled, and then imagine that same God who made the promises telling you to go and take your one and only son and offer him as a sacrifice. That is exactly what God told Abraham to do. Two days ago, we looked at Abraham's faith and trust in God, and now that faith is being put to the ultimate test. Abraham's faith was built on the rationale that no matter what happened, God would somehow, some way, keep his promises.

**Hebrews 11:17-19** *By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, <sup>18</sup> even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." <sup>19</sup> Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.*

In a very real way, what happens in this story of Abraham and Isaac is a picture of what would one day happen with God and His only Son, Jesus. The similarities are remarkable:

- The place where Abraham took Isaac to be sacrificed was a place called Mount Moriah. Almost 2000 years later the Temple, where sacrifices would be offered for sin, was constructed on this same mount, and then 2000 years after that Jesus, God's only son, would be crucified on Mount Calvary, which is a hill that is part of this same Mount Moriah.
- Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice on his back. Jesus carried a wooden cross for his sacrifice on his back.
- Just as Isaac trusted his father, and didn't try to run away, Jesus trusted his Father, and didn't try to run away, but instead: *"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem"* (Luke 9:51)
- Just as Isaac was to take the place of the lamb for this sacrifice, so Jesus became *"the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world"* (John 1: 29).
- After Abraham proved his willingness to sacrifice his own son, God provided a substitutionary ram for the sacrifice, so Abraham called the place where Isaac was to be sacrificed, 'The Lord will provide.' 4000 years later, God did just that, he provided a once

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and for all sacrifice for our sin, by giving his own son to take our place. With the ram we have a picture of an innocent victim dying as a substitute for another. Its blood was spilt so that others could go free. This again is what Jesus did for us. "God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood" (Romans 3:25).

**January 21 – Hebrews 11: 8 – 16**

The New Testament writer of the Book of Hebrews does a wonderful job of looking back on Abraham's faith, and what that faith was really all about. Remember, Abraham never really saw all of the promises God had made to him fulfilled in his lifetime. When Abraham died, all he had were God's promises and one son, Isaac, whom God had promised to fulfill those promises through. In a very real sense, Abraham was still a wandering nomad. But Abraham died believing God. Abraham died as a wandering nomad, but he looked forward to a city with foundations. He died with just one child, but he looked forward in faith to the time when his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. He didn't receive all the things God had promised during his own lifetime, but he saw them in the distance. He didn't know as much as we know now. He didn't exactly know how God would fulfill the promises he made. He didn't fully understand that all the promises would be fulfilled in Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 1:20** *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.*

Even though Abraham didn't fully understand everything, he lived by faith trusting God. We understand so much more. We have seen Jesus crucified on the cross for our sins. We now live under the promise just as Abraham did—the promise of a heavenly city with foundations.

**Revelation 21:2 - 27** *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." <sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." <sup>6</sup> He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the*



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*Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup> He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. <sup>8</sup> But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." <sup>9</sup> One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." <sup>10</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. <sup>11</sup> It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup> It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>13</sup> There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. <sup>14</sup> The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. <sup>15</sup> The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. <sup>16</sup> The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. <sup>17</sup> He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. <sup>18</sup> The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. <sup>19</sup> The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup> the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. <sup>21</sup> The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. <sup>22</sup> I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. <sup>24</sup> The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. <sup>25</sup> On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. <sup>27</sup> Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

This is the city that Abraham was ultimately looking forward to in faith. It is the same city that we look forward to in faith, because of what Christ has done for us on the cross.

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**January 22 – Genesis 24**

In this passage, we find the beautiful account of how Isaac and Rebekah became married. While this is very different from the way a man finds and marries a wife in our culture, this was the way it was commonly done in Abraham and Isaac's day. The servant, acting as an agent for Abraham, goes back to Abraham's homeland to find a wife for Isaac. Believe it or not, without looking too hard we can see a picture of Jesus in this story, and the picture involves us. In several different places in the New Testament the church (that's us) is pictured as the bride of Christ.

**Ephesians 5:25-27** *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

**Revelation 21:2** *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband...*

Now stop and think about the servant's role in this process of finding a wife for Isaac. He was sent out by Abraham to find a bride, prepare the bride for the wedding, and bring the bride safely home, so that she could become Isaac's wife. Isn't this exactly how the Holy Spirit works? The Holy Spirit is the one sent by the Father and the Son to come and find us, and prepare us to be the bride of Christ. Rebekah didn't find Isaac, the servant found Rebekah and was brought to Isaac to be Isaac's forever. In the same way, the Bible teaches us that we aren't really looking for Jesus, but the Holy Spirit comes and takes us to be his bride forever.

**Ephesians 2: 1 – 7** *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*