

Genesis 11:26-32 Pain is Part of the Plan 12/3/17

When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.²⁷ Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. ²⁸ Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans. ²⁹ And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. ³⁰ Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

³¹ Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. ³² The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

(Pastor prays)

We find ourselves this morning leaving one section of Genesis and preparing for the next. The end of Chapter 11 is a setup for the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. The list of names in Chapter 10-11 becomes the history of salvation in Chapter 12. And this morning I'm going to try to connect Genesis 11 with the birth of our savior in Bethlehem.

Now admittedly, there is a long distance between Genesis 11 and Bethlehem, but the line is a straight one and, as we follow it today, I want to speak to the ears of the heartbroken, depressed, the unfulfilled and the homesick. Because to get to the baby in Bethlehem, we've got to start with a young pagan couple that can't have children. When we meet them in Chapter 11, they don't know they are part of God's plan. In fact, they don't even know who God is.

Before we get to the greatness of Abraham and his wife Sarai, we take a brief look at what God brought them through. And that's the language I want you to hear and the truth I want you to grasp: that our God is *here*. He is not silent. He is always working. He never forgets His people. And our God, the God of the Bible, He never wastes anything.

Chapter 11 is the prelude or intro to God's sweeping redemption plan, a plan that culminates in the coming of Jesus Christ; and this story and these few verses tell us some things about the character of God and the certainty of the future and, more specifically, about the way your life, right now, is unfolding. For some of you, it's been a strange or even difficult year, and this morning, as we look back on last year and forward to next year, we have a passage that assures us of something that I'm hoping you will cling to.

God's Plan Is Good and His Grace Is Real

Using the passage as our guide, let's break this into two points and hopefully make some helpful applications.

God Does Have a Plan and It Is Good

In the text, we see evidences of God's plan when we meet a man named Terah in verse 27. And Terah will have three sons – Abram, Nahor and Haran – but only one of them will be a significant part of God's redeeming plan. Think back in the history of Genesis. Adam had other son's but God used Seth. Lamech had other sons but God used Noah. Noah had other sons, but God chose Shem. Terah had other sons but God uses Abram. It's part of God's plan. Adam to Seth to Noah to Shem to Terah to Abram to Isaac to Jacob to Judah to David to Joseph and Mary and to an infant in a manger. There is a long distance between Genesis 11 and Bethlehem, but the line is a straight one, and this straight line reminds us of God's life-giving, soul-saving love in Christ. 1 John 4:19 says, *We love because he first loved us.* And Ephesians 1:4, *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love*

What I'm saying to you is that a consistent theme runs through the Bible in God's good plan for His children, even though, at times, it doesn't feel like it or seem like it. Let me show you some things that happened to Abram, the man who would be Abraham. Good and bad.

In verse 27, Andrew's nephew Lot is born. In verse 28, his brother dies. In verse 29, he marries a hometown girl, and verse 30 lets us know that through years of struggle, they have been unable to have children. Verse 31 tells of the unfulfilled dream and, in verse 32, his father dies.

Here we are, being told of God's redeeming, sweeping plan, and there are several points of pain in this brief description. His brother dies, he doesn't finish his trip to Canaan. His father dies and then we see in verse 30, there is a deeply personal and painful detail. Sarai was barren. She had no child. Think of it. There is a certain loneliness and pain in the events described here.

Even his name seemed to mock him. Abram, "Exalted Father." And the one thing he wasn't good at? Being a father. Can't you see that is preparing and shaping Abram? Can't you see, this is God preparing and shaping you?

Did you know that pain has a place in God's plan? Sorrow, loss, defeat, broken dreams, sickness, job loss, your broken heart, depression. Did you know that depression has a place in God's plan? Nothing is ever wasted with God. In this grand story of Abraham's life, these things were necessary for Abram to become *Abraham*. I think it was A.W. Tozer who said, "It is doubtful that God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply." And so often that hurt comes in the form of loss.

I'm not sure who said it, but I believe it to be true: "God prepares us for better things to come by weaning us from the things we thought we couldn't live without." Naked we came into this world and naked we leave. And in between the good things, bad things come and go. Then, only God remains.

Before we ever meet Abraham, the Father of Nations, God shows us the Abram of Chapter 11. Before we ever meet Sarah, the Mother of Nations, there is Sarai, hometown broken-hearted girl.

I show you all of that about those two to tell you something about your life: that when you are in Christ, through pain and sorrow and loss and defeat and frustration and depression, you have Christ as your treasure and you can say with Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:7-10, *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.*

God does have a plan and that plan is good because it points you to Christ. Your need for His atoning death and the power of His resurrection are part of the plan. Now let me show you the second point.

God Is a God of Grace and His Grace Is Real

Let me show you where I see grace in the passage. Let's read verses 27-28 and as we do, notice Abram's dad's name and where they are from. *Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. ²⁸ Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans.*

Terah means "moon," and Ur of the Chaldeans was a center of lunar worship. Terah and his family, Abram and Sarai, were idolaters. You say, "that seems harsh" but let me show you something at the end of the Book of Joshua. Joshua is giving a speech renewing the covenant of God's people.

In Chapter 24 there is the famous *choose this day whom you will serve, as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*" Early in that speech in Joshua 24:2, describing Abraham, says, *"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. I'm not saying Abraham isn't a great guy or that he didn't come from a great family. Abram and Sarai were in the best family on Earth. They were really successful idolaters.*

So if God didn't break into his life, there wasn't any hope. Abram wasn't qualified to be the Father of Nations and Sarai was barren. On top of that, they didn't worship the one true God. In short, they were dead in sin. And the beautiful news of the Gospel of Grace is that in Christ, God saves sinners. Isn't that what Paul says in Ephesians 2:5, *even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— Grace.*

There's a good chance that some of you sitting here are like Abraham in the text. You are serving idols, little gods of your own making. And this morning God has awakened your heart to His grace at the cross. Run man! Run from those idols and run to Christ.

Or maybe you are like Sarai, broken-hearted or have an unfulfilled dream, a dream that has become your treasure. Run, young lady! Run to the treasure that is Christ. Run to our God who has loved you from the foundation of the world, a God who knew you before you ever acknowledged Him, a Holy Creator God who made you in His own image to live for His glory.

But you haven't done that. You haven't been able to because of the sin. Here's the Gospel of Jesus, the Son of God, God Himself, who lived, died and was resurrected so that you can be saved. God the Spirit moves and calls, convicts and prompts. Our God has come to save. The Father planned it, the Son secured it and the Spirit awakens us to believe.

(Pastor extends the invitation and prays)