

7.4.24 pm

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Date: 07 April 2024

Preacher: Reverend Donald Macdonald

[0 : 00] Could I welcome you to this service of worship? And if there are any visitors, I hope you feel warmly welcomed. I too am a visitor.

The practice at this service is to have the first item of praise in Gaelic, followed by a Gaelic prayer, I understand, and then the rest of the service is in English.

So I hope your patience will not be taxed too much if you don't have the Gaelic language. Let us sing to God's praise from Psalm 105.

And we remain seated for this singing. O Hugu-bo-jag-hist-o-year-an-am-san-gur-feet.

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

[2 : 12] CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS
SNING Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[5 : 09] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[7 : 39] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Amen.

Thank you.

[10 : 09] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[12 : 39] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[17 : 08] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[19 : 38] Thank you.

Thank you.

And you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[22 : 08] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[24 : 38] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[27 : 08] It can you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

In the name of the and the faith, it takes God at his word and obeys that word. Faith is not a plant that grows as it were in the soil of nature, neither is it mere feelings. Feelings are not much good when you are in the den of lions or hanging on a cross. That is not to say but that feelings accompany saving faith. As someone has expressed it, and as for the life that's hidden, his was one of faith indeed. Not at all on sight or feelings did his living spirit feed. This comes from the elegy that was written by MacDonald O'Ferrentosh about his father. It's written in three parts in

[31 : 04] Gaelic. This is an English translation of it, and perhaps it loses a little in the translation.

I'm not sure. As for the life that's hidden, his was one of faith indeed. Not at all on sight or feelings did his living spirit feed. Ever thought he as his word was, living feelings fresh and good, but that he should live on feelings. They could never serve as food. Just reflect on that. That he could live on feelings, they could never serve as food. Oh yeah, feelings are good. Makes you feel uplifted perhaps. But that's not the food of faith. Christ is the food of faith. Christ is the one that satiates the appetite of faith that has been given to men and women and boys and girls. So in the New

Testament you find Christ teaching the tree is known by its fruit. The psalmist teaches that the blessed man is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither. Faith is seen in its effect upon the life of a person. It's very clear too from the Bible that as long as a person is imperfect, there will not be perfect obedience in their lives. And that was true even of Abraham, the father of the faithful, as the events that are recorded later in this chapter make clear, but are not the subject of my discourse this evening. But here in this section, the emphasis is on his walk of faith and the obedience he displayed. Were that not so, he may have remained in Chiron. We don't know how long he remained in Chiron.

The narrative in Genesis doesn't say except to record that Terah, his father, died in Chiron. But in the book of Acts you find this written, after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living.

In the address that Stephen gives to the Sanhedrin. We are also told how old Abraham was when he left Chiron. He was 75 years old when he departed from Chiron.

I couldn't imagine at my age moving to another land, but I'm that age at the moment. And that tells you something of the caliber of the man. The emphasis appears to be on the obedience of Abraham to the call he received.

[34 : 10] He couldn't settle in Chiron. He had to move out. The impression is that he would not feel comfortable or at home in Chiron. Because Chiron was also a hub of idol worship.

The Bible says nothing about the distance he had to travel to arrive in the land of promise. But commentators are of the view that he had to make a journey of approximately 800 miles.

That would have been a long, arduous journey in those days. And I am of the view that Abraham testified to the power of saving faith in his daily life.

What evidence is there to support that view? Well, the fifth verse of the twelfth chapter records those who were his traveling companions.

Abraham took Sarah, his wife, Lot, his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Chiron, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan.

[35 : 24] You remember that when he left the place of his birth, Ar of the Chaldees, the Bible tells us that he traveled in a small group. His father Terah, Sarah his wife, and Lot his nephew.

But a small group. But when you find him leaving Chiron, he took Sarah his wife, Lot his brother's son, and the people that they had acquired in Chiron.

Now, perhaps we are inclined to think of this nameless group of people they had acquired in Chiron as being slaves.

I don't believe they were. They weren't slaves that he had purchased or hired hands. If that had been the case, they would have been numbered among his possessions.

But that's not how the Bible records for us this group. Therefore, one has to conclude that those who joined him were those in whose lives his faith had made an impression.

[36 : 38] So that they had joined this group of people who were traveling to the promised land. And you know, if you reflect on it, there may have been people in your own life where their faith made an indelible impression on your own mind and heart.

People who lived Christ. And that may have impressed you much more than anything you heard or saw. Just that they lived Christ.

They were a living example of Christ in their daily living. And the impression. You may have wanted to be like them. You may have thought one day, I would like to be like them.

And so on. Well, I believe that these people were people in whose lives Abraham's faith made an impression. Remember?

It was largely given over to idol worship. Joseph. in the walk of faith.

[38 : 16] She would surely be a help to him. At least there is no indication to say that she wasn't. Or that she wished to remain in Cheren. Or that she was so fond of the place that she looked back like the wife of Lot when he was called to leave Sodom.

It was a journey of faith. True faith trusts in the bare word of God. True faith steps out on the basis of God's word.

True faith journeys in accordance with the word of God. True faith builds altars and offers worship to God.

True faith proclaims the name and the power of God. So that's my first point. Second point is this. His journey showed his belief in the temporary nature of life.

The New Testament account that we read from the letter to the Hebrews makes that very plain. By faith he went to live in the land of promise as in a foreign land living in tents, not significant with Isaac and Jacob bears with them of the same promise for he was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God.

[39 : 48] Part of the impact of effectual calling is to break the bonds that unite us to this present life.

Bonds that are incredibly strong. But as a consequence of the power of grace at work the bonds that bind us to the temporary things of life are loosened bit by bit.

When the Apostle Paul viewed his life drawing to a close he wrote the time of my departure has come.

In other words the strong ropes for want of a better phrase that bound him to the present life were all been loosened.

He was reconciled to leaving this life because he had come to learn that to be with Christ is far better.

[40 : 55] And from the context in Genesis 12 it is evident that Abraham and his companions were journeying from north to south. When they came to the land of Canaan does the writer tell us that Abraham states we have arrived let's put down roots.

Do you find them saying this is my resting place forever here I will dwell for I have desired it. Or you do not find any of these statements being made.

But only this Abraham passed through the land to the place at Shechem to the Oak of Moreh. when he arrived in the land promised he continued to journey.

A man who in response to the revelation he received of the God of glory moved out from the place of his birth left the family he belonged to.

It would be wrong to conclude that everyone who is called by God is asked to leave the place of their birth or family and journey to a new place.

[42 : 07] Some are in the service of the Most High and it's a privilege to be involved in the service of the Most High.

But that is not true of everyone. In the first epistle or first letter of Peter you find the apostle writing to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion.

They have been chosen and called by God not to be at home in the world but to be strangers and sojourners.

They are to be in the world but not of the world. Where the grace of faith is implanted it alters our relationship to the world and to the practices of the unbeliever in the world.

Beloved, says Peter, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

[43 : 13] And so as believers journey through life a yearning perhaps stronger a longing could I say even a homesickness arises for a world that has not yet arrived.

One commentator I read expressed it something like this. God erects a tent within our hearts so that we can no longer be settled in this world or satisfied in what it provides.

And I like that. Give me a lot of thought. What the Lord does in our lives. Psalm 84 Psalmist

observes Blessed are those whose strength is in you in whose heart are the highways to Sion.

God has placed the highway to their higher destination in their hearts and their blessing is from him.

As I mentioned Abram was 75 years old when he left He didn't die.

He didn't die as I mentioned this morning until he was 175. So for a hundred years a whole century he moved from place to place dwelling in a tent.

[44 : 39] and the fact that he dwelt in a tent is an apt illustration of the impermanent temporary nature of this present life.

The tent was not a permanent dwelling. It was easily dismantled and despite the impermanence of his dwelling place he faced many trials many difficulties in his life.

For those familiar with John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress you may remember the pictures that John Bunyan so skillfully wove into the story of the hardships and the difficulties faced by Pilgrim.

Many discouraging incidents from the time that Christian left the city of destruction on his journey to the celestial city.

The slow of despond the hill difficulty the valley of humiliation vanity fair doubt in castle the stronghold of giant despair the river of death all bringing their own challenge into the life of Christian.

[46 : 02] And then you have the plethora of characters he meets who try to deflect him from his journey. And in some ways that is how it was for Abram and for all who follow on the narrow road.

The New Testament teaches in the Sermon on the Mount that those who enter by the narrow gate that the way is hard that leads to life. To go through the narrow gate means leaving a lot of baggage behind.

There are restrictions on going through the narrow gate for all who enter the narrow gate have come from the broad way with all the accumulation of baggage that they have gathered on that road.

Following Jesus means turning your back on the old way of life and that's exactly what Abram was doing. Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem to the Oak of Moreh.

At that time the Canaanites were in the land says Moses. The place at Shechem to the Oak of Moreh was a pagan place of worship.

[47 : 23] Pagan rites were taught there so although he discovered that he had left behind places of pagan idolatry having left out of the Chaldees having left here and he was still meeting such places and such worship on his journey.

The current believer in the 21st century world finds that they too meet with idol worship. This man Abram demonstrated that he was of a totally different mind to those of idol worshippers.

What was the evidence of that? So he built there an altar to the Lord. Perhaps it was his refusal to conform to the surrounding idolatry that accounts for his frequent movement.

I'm not sure. Although his tent would leave no trace behind, once dismantled in his journey from place to place, he left an altar as testimony to his worshipping of the great true God, the God of glory, who had revealed himself to him and had spoken with such power and authority in moving him out from Ur of the Chaldees in the first place.

so that although he never possessed the land during his earthly life, he spread the savour of his faith as a sweet aroma to the Lord.

[49 : 03] His journey was that of a stranger and pilgrim in this life. His faith meeting with many difficulties and challenges, many of the challenges in your own life if you are a believer this evening, arise from within.

Perhaps the most severe ones arise from within and not from without. It was a journey of faith and finally his journey was encouraged by divine intervention.

Where do we find that? Verses 6 and 7, at Shechem, at the Oak of Moreh we are told, then the Lord appeared to Abraham and said to your offspring, I will give this land.

How did he appear to him? We're not told, apart from the fact that he had appeared. Abraham, remember, had traveled some 800 miles.

We're not told how long it took him to make that journey. all we are told is that they continued on the journey from Chiron till they came to the land of Canaan.

[50 : 24] And you cannot help but speculate as to whether questions arose from time to time in his mind. Are we really in the path of obedience?

Is this the land that God promised? Do questions, similar questions, not arise in your own mind if you are tonight a believer in Christ?

Questions such as have I really gone through the narrow access? Am I among the few that walk the narrow way?

for the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few? Perhaps someone might say, well, surely the path of obedience will be easy.

I'll tell that to the disciples of Christ as they struggled in the storm on the Sea of Galilee. They were following instructions, direct instructions from the Lord.

[51 : 37] You see, the path of obedience is frequently the very opposite of easy. What makes it so hard?

Well, striving after holiness for one thing, because you are continually opposed by an enemy who never tires.

What enemy is that? The sin so easily besets us. You tire before sin tires. Or you'll tire often before sin tires.

Sin never gets weary, never tires of setting temptation before your mind and your heart. It doesn't know the meaning of tiredness.

Remember how Paul expressed it from his own personal experience. I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law, waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

[52 : 47] And you remember that provoked the cry from the very depth of his being, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? No, that's not the cry of despair.

Remember that. Not a cry of despair. Again, believers are frequently subjected to the fierce attacks of the powers of darkness.

Hard way because it is the way of self-denial. The word translated deny is a strong word of negation. I suppose you could say it means to forget oneself entirely.

Do you think that's easy? Forget oneself entirely. It means taking up your cross daily.

The world's hostility is expressed in reviling and persecuting and uttering all kinds of evil against the believer falsely.

[53 : 57] On my account says Christ. So, returning to the question, how did God appear to Abraham? Was it in a vision? Or was it in a dream?

Some would say so. Was it a theophany? God appearing in human form? And I suppose the response that I have to give is this.

we don't really know. The Bible is silent on the matter. But what is more important is that Abraham was far from the place where he was first spoken to by the Lord.

Still surrounded by a hostile and godly culture. Did he need a word from God? Well, I can't answer on the part of Abraham.

But it would not surprise me if he did so. Do we not too require to hear from the Lord? The Lord drew near to Abraham.

[55 : 04] That proves, if we need proof, that there is no circumstance or situation in life which the Lord is unable to draw near.

And when he does draw near, he knows how to address our need. The Old Testament tells us he knows how to sustain with a word him who is weary.

He knows how to speak a word in season. And in many ways that is what God was doing here to Abraham whom he called. One far from his own people surrounded by ungodly inhabitants in the midst of difficulties God reaches out as it were a hand to bring encouragement.

And he does so through his word with the renewal of his promise. To your offspring I will give this land.

Think of the terms of the renewal of promise. What you discover is that there are two promises promises in the one statement of renewed promise.

[56 : 15] God promised ultimate possession of the land in which Abraham sojourned. And secondly that Sarah would get a family. And the letter to the Romans highlights the trust Abraham had in God's promise.

No unbelief made him waver concerning the promises of God but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God. Fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

How was it possible for Abraham to do that? And the answer is found because of his knowledge of God.

I suppose if I put it this way Abraham had come to trust the character, power, and faithfulness of God to keep his promise.

And so as Jesus said to his disciples what is impossible with man is possible with God. God promised Abraham first salvation to which Abraham responded in faith.

[57 : 25] As Abraham puts his faith in practice the Lord gave further confirmation and elaboration of his promise. And if in Christ this evening you will have experience of that too in your own life.

When you first believed you understood very little. You may tell me that you still consider you understand very little.

God but is it not the case that we start by believing without fully understanding but as you go on in the life of faith God gives you deeper insights and sharper clarity of the hope that is in Christ.

Would you not agree? I have already mentioned that Abraham built an altar at Moreh a token of his faith in response to the renewed confirmation of God's promise to him but he didn't remain there.

We are told from there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east and then we read of the practice of this there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord.

[58 : 50] He called on the name of the Lord. He responded to God's promise with both public and private worship but more I believe is suggested by the fact that Moses records he called upon the name of the Lord.

Perhaps you might remember that in the fourth chapter of Genesis it is recorded that in the days of Seth death. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.

Now that doesn't merely mean that people worshipped the Lord in private but they witnessed to those around them. In fact it suggests public gathered worship of God as they delighted in his promised salvation.

Worship is the proper response of believing people to what God has revealed of himself and to save in plan. That is I believe exactly what Abraham did when the Bible tells us he called upon the name of the Lord.

He testified by his altars and his life that he worshipped the living and true God as distinct from those who are worshipping idols.

[60 : 20] So wherever we go let us not fail to do likewise that God might have the glory and our lives testify to the almighty power of divine grace.

The Lord encouraged Abraham by his word and it is through his word that he continues to encourage his people to the present out to take up your cross and follow the Lord.

Abraham went as the Lord had told him a journey of faith the journey of a stranger and a pilgrim in this life a journey that was encouraged by divine intervention.

May all sojourn through life be likewise that we too be no strangers to the voice of God in bringing encouragement to our lives.

For the New Testament declares of Abraham and all like him therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared for them a city.

[61 : 36] So in conclusion let me ask if you are not following the Lord is it because you are ashamed of Jesus and what he has done?

Hmm? Are you ashamed of Jesus? Are you ashamed to be associated with Jesus? for the Lord he gave his life that sinners like you and me might live and live eternally.

Let us pray. Oh almighty and ever blessed Lord we give thee thanks for the way in which thou dost deal with unworthy sinners for the way in which thou dost lead them and guide them through all the trials and tribulations of life so that they are enabled by grace to go out in obedience to your call. May that be true of us and the glory shall be thine. In Jesus name we ask it. Amen. Let us conclude by singing from Psalm 62 that's in the sing Psalms version Psalm 62 and at verse 7 My honor and salvation rest on God my rock and mighty fort O people trust in him always to him alone pour out your heart The low-born man is but a breath The high-born man is but a lie Weighed in a balance side by side they come to nothing but a sigh Do not seek after wealth by force or triumph in ill-gotten gain and even though your goods increase set not your heart on what is vain

My God has spoken I have heard that you are strong and loving Lord each one according to his deeds you will assuredly reward Let us sing these verses My honor and salvation rest on God My honor and salvation rest On God my walk and mighty fort O people trust in him always To him alone pour out your heart The low or man is but a bread

[65 : 03] The high born man is but a high Within a balanced side by side They come to nothing but a side Do not seek after wealth by force For triumph through hillbottom gain And even though your goose increase Set not your heart on what is grain My God has spoken

I have heard That you are strong and loving Lord Each one according to his deeds You will assure the reward Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit rest on and abide with you all now and forever Amen to aspire! aspire! aspire!