



Sermon – 08/14/2022

Phillip Bethancourt

**Verses Covered This Week**

Genesis 11:10 – 32

Genesis 11:4

Joshua 24:2

As you grab a seat, if you're happy to have our full worship ministry back with us this morning, will you let them know that today? So blessed to have them here. Genesis 11 is where we're going to start our time together. If you want to start working your way there. And if you're a guest with us whether in the room or watching online, welcome home. We're diving into God's word. We're finishing the first half of the book of Genesis. One through eleven is what most scholars believe as the first part and the second part begins in Genesis 12. And I want you to remember how this connects to what we saw last week with the Tower of Babel. So, there's a sense in which last week, we saw beginning of the end for Babel. That pride comes before the fall. But now what we're going to see for the rest of Genesis this week is it's the end of the beginning. That as we turn our hearts towards the second half of the book, we're going to see that a promise comes before fulfillment. And we've got one more last difficult genealogy to go in the book of Genesis. It's going to come right here today. But before we read the text, there's something I want to do during our prayer time today which is to pray as the school year begins for all of those of you in the room that are connected to educating the next generation. So, in just a minute, I'm going to ask you to stand up so that we can recognize you and pray over you. But I want us to lift up our administrators, our staff, our faculty, our teachers, those that are at Blinn and at A&M, those that are homeschooling or in coops and private schools and public schools. I know the start of the new year is a uniquely challenge time. And so if y'all would just stand up right where you're seated, stand up so that we can recognize you and to pray over you in this time. If you're tied in in any way to educating the next generation right here in our community. We all let them know how thankful you are for them serving in this important role. Okay, y'all stay standing. Stay standing because we want to pray for you right now. If you've got somebody nearby you, I'd love for you to extend a hand towards them in a show of support as we pray for them in this time.

Father, as we gather together today, we lift up this next year in school, God. We're asking that You would work in a special way in and through all the people in this room that are standing as they invest in the next generation. Lord, I want to pray for our teachers that are here today as they face this new year and all the difficulties and challenges that will come. I pray that You

sustain them, that You strengthen them so that a light can shine forth from them in their classrooms regardless of the circumstances that unfold. We're praying for the administrators, for the leaders in the room, God. We lift them up to You that in the midst of uncertainty, in the midst of difficult decisions that await them, we pray for wisdom. We pray for endurance. We pray for patience as they show the leadership that our community needs and do it in a way that pleases You. We pray for the staff that are represented in this room,. God, that as the new year hits us with all sorts of demands and behind the scenes complications for their a role, I pray that You would fill them with joyful hearts. That they would not be besieged by bitterness or frustration or disappointment but instead that those joyful hearts of service would reflect Christ's sacrificial service for us. And then, Lord, I want to pray for our students and our parents as this new year begins. As these students prepare to return to the classroom, whether it's in school or at home. I pray that You would ready their hearts and minds to grow in wisdom and knowledge that they might have a better picture of the way that You design the world. And we pray for these parents that they would join in this education for their children and help them to see how all of it finds its centerpiece, it's focal point, right there in the life and death of Jesus Christ. And it's in His name we pray this morning. Amen.

Well, as they grab their seats, let me turn your attention with me to Genesis 11. We're going to start now in verse 10 with this final genealogy in Scripture. We'll work our way all the way through the end of the chapter but we'll now, we'll go from verse 10 to verse 26.

<sup>10</sup>These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood. <sup>11</sup>And Shem lived after he fathered Arpachshad 500 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>12</sup>When Arpachshad had lived 35 years, he fathered Shelah. <sup>13</sup>And Arpachshad lived after he fathered Shelah 403 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup>When Shelah had lived 30 years, he fathered Eber. <sup>15</sup>And Shelah lived after he fathered Eber 403 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>16</sup>When Eber had lived 34 years, he fathered Peleg. <sup>17</sup>And Eber lived after he fathered Pileg 430 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>18</sup>When Peleg had lived 30 years, he fathered Reu. <sup>19</sup>And Peleg lived after he fathered Reu 209 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup>When Reu had lived 32 years, he fathered Serug. <sup>21</sup>And Reu lived after he fathered Sarah 207 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>22</sup>When Serug had lived 30 years, he fathered Nahor. <sup>23</sup>And Serug lived after he fathered Nahor 200 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>24</sup>When Nehor had lived 29 years, he fathered Terah. <sup>25</sup>And Nahor lived after he fathered Terah 119 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>26</sup>When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

So, there it is. This first part of the last genealogy in Genesis. And as we're focusing in on the message today, I want you to notice on the screens a picture of a gift that I got a few years ago. It was a really thoughtful gift. I was working in another ministry before the Lord brought me here to pastor and they gave me a gift of some stationary. And on that stationary, it had written at the top in ways that maybe difficult to see in just a second when the picture comes up. It had a verse from Proverbs chapter 22. And what that says is, a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches. And for the team in the back, I think it's in point-2 if you'll, there it is. Perfect. We got it now. You can see on the right side, at the top, it says, a great name is to be praised and to be chosen rather than great riches. And then right there in the middle, it has this note that says to me, we are so grateful for you and your great name. So, on the left side, it's got the envelope

that came in and then within the gift, was stationary, beautiful, embossed with my name on it that I could use for months to come as I'm writing letters to other people. There's only one problem with this gift. Even though it had good intentions, it had a bad impact because if you'll notice my name on the left is spelled with one L instead of two. Which meant all the stationary that they had given to honor my great name was misspelled. They got it wrong. And even though they had good intentions, the impact was lost because it showed that they had lost sight of the value of the name that they were attempting to recognize and to celebrate. We've got the same kind of danger when we come to a passage like Genesis 11. That we might see these names. That we might recognize them and our intentions in coming to the text are good but the impact on us is lost because we failed to see the value in them. We look at these names, they're hard to pronounce. They're difficult to understand why they're there in the text. And it's hard to make sense of it. But if we remember what's happening in this passage, it will change the way we see it. Remember, Genesis 11 is like the bridge between the first part of Genesis that tells the story of God's creation of the universe and the second part of Genesis that tells the story of God's covenant with Abraham. And the bridge, the connecting point between those two is this passage right here. These names that span from creation to the covenant. And here's what we're going to find this morning as we work our way through this genealogy in Genesis 11. We'll see how it recounts the shape of our story. That it, that it helps us to see more clearly the shape of our identity and it reveals the shape of our future.

And so let's notice the way that this begins now back in verse 10. The first thing we'll notice is that Genesis 11 recounts the shape of our story. And I want to call your attention back to that first verse in verse 10. There's a phrase there at the beginning that you might have just breezed right past. Look at what it says. Verse 10, these are the generations of Shem. So, if you're taking notes and you got a pen, underline the phrase, these are the generations because we're going to see it over and over again in just a second. Or if you've got a highlighter or if you've got your Bible app, highlight that phrase. These are the generations. Now, in the original language, that phrase, these are the generations, is one word. That word is *Toledot*. I want you to say it with me on the count of three. Are you ready? We're going to speak a little Hebrew this morning. One, two, three. *Toledot*. Okay, now you're saying, why are we paying attention to this seemingly insignificant word in this seemingly insignificant passage about these seemingly insignificant people? Well, what I'm going to show you here in just a minute is that this word, *Toledot*, is the framework for the entire message of Genesis. As a matter of fact, if you work way to the book, it shows up at 10 times in 10 strategic places. It's like slicing a pie up. It cuts the slices of Genesis into different sections and proportions them. And right here in Genesis 1 through 11, what we find is that this phrase, this word shows up six different times and it always happens at some of the biggest moments in Genesis. So, we're going to cycle back. Hold your place here but go back with me to Genesis chapter 2 in verse 4. Because I want you to see the way that the *Toledot* splits up Genesis 1 through 11 into six different slices, six different sections. And the first slice comes in Genesis 2:4. Where we see first the purpose of God in our origins. So, Genesis 2:4 has this to say, these are the generations. That's our phrase, right? These are the generations of the heavens and the earth. When they were created in the day that the Lord God made, the earth and the heavens. So, in this first section that comes before this first *Toledot* we see the story of creation. That God speaks the world into existence. That the King establishes His kingdom. That all is right. But this first *Toledot* serves as a swinging door in a sense. It not just looks back on creation of the world but it looks forward in creation to humanity.

So, you will see the second slice of Genesis comes right after this. So, when you look at Genesis 2:4, we see following that, the patience of God in our in our sin. So, from Genesis 2:4 to 4:26, we see what happens there. That God creates humanity. He commissions him for His kingdom. But then they turn away from God in their sin and He confronts them with judgement. But in the midst of that confrontation, there is the comfort of a promise in Genesis 3:15. That one day, He will raise up a deliverer who will set them free from their sin. So, now, let's turn back over to the next *Toledot*. It comes in Genesis chapter 5 in verse 1. This will be our third slice. It'll show us our third section that's here. So, this shows us the providence of God in our pain. Notice what Genesis 5:1 says, right after Cain has murdered Abel. It says, this is the book of the generations of Adam. There's a phrase again, the generations. When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. See, remember, Genesis is a story of our failure but God's faithfulness. It's a story of our pain but God's promises. And we see that providence in the midst of our pain playing out right here. That after this death, after this sin, God speaks this first genealogy. He tracks the line that Genesis 3:15 promised. That one day a deliverer will come. He is showing how He is keeping His promise providentially even the midst of our pain. Now, move over one more chapter with me to Genesis 9 in verse 9. You're going to see another *Toledot* there. Genesis 6:9, after this genealogy, we'll see now the promises of God in our brokenness. So this is at the start of the story of Noah and the flood. And Genesis 6:9 says this, these are the generations of Noah. You see our phrase? Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation, and Noah walked with God. And what we saw as we worked our way through Noah's story is that Noah's story is the story of redemption in miniature. That what God does is He brings judgement through the waters of judgement upon the people for their sin. But in the midst of there's a rescue of His people who He brings through the flood and raises them to walk in newness of life. He sets them free from that reality. And right there, we're seeing the way that He keeps His promises even in the midst of our brokenness.

Now, notice this next *Toledot* that comes at the end of Noah's story. It's in Genesis 10 in verse 1. So, slide over with me there. We see a fifth slice here. We see the pattern of God for our future. And after the story of Noah, Genesis 10 starts that bridge from Adam to Abraham. And Genesis 10:1 begins another genealogy by saying this, these are the generations, you see our phrase, of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, sons were born to them after the flood. You see, the story of Noah doesn't just provide us a picture of our past, the story of Noah, and what follows, provides a glimpse of our future. It gives us this taste of the patterns of God for what He's going to do still to come. In sustaining us that there's new life after the flood. That there's life after the death that comes with the judgment that results from our sin. And it's setting the stage through this genealogy for the way that God is going to set us free in Jesus Christ.

Which brings us now back to our text. Look back at where we all started. Genesis 11 in verse 10. It's that fifth *Toledot*. It starts that sixth slice and it's right there. Let's read it again. In Genesis 11:10, we see the plan of God for our lives when it says,

<sup>10</sup>These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood.

Now, we will get more into depth of what this slice means in just a moment in our second point. But let me pause right here. Have you ever noticed this phrase showing up again and again and again in Genesis? It's there in the text but we would normally breeze right over the *Toledot*. But God is using this to show us how His story fits together. And when we get a better sense of our story in Genesis, it can give us a better sense of the way that God is calling us to live. And so what this is doing for us is it's showing us that this is not just some obscure word and some obscure passage. This is at the heart of what God is doing in Genesis and therefore in our lives. I want you to think about what this *Toledot* means for us today at Central. What does it mean when God is speaking of the way He's at work in any given generation? Well, the key to understanding the significance of this for our church or for our lives is to recognize that the story we live in shapes the strategy we live out. The story we live in shapes the strategy we live out. And what that means for us as a church is that when we do ministry, when we organize the functions of this church, we want what we do to emerge from what God has already done in Christ that we see right here in the text. You following me? And so we want our strategy to emerge from God's story. So, just think about the nature of some of the things that we do in this church and how it fits in with the story. The reason why we do life groups here, we kicked them off last week again for the fall semester, is because what we see in Genesis 1. Genesis 1 gives us this picture of a calling to be in relationship with God and relationship with one another. And one of the ways we foster that is through our life groups. Or think about the way that Genesis 2 shapes the ministries we do for marriage, through our Re:engage marriage enrichment ministry. Or our Merge premarital ministry that we do. Genesis 2 gives us this picture of God's design for man and woman coming together as one flesh. And that story shapes our strategy for investing in the marriages in our midst. Or think about Genesis 3. Genesis 3 is the foundation for why we'll do next month's Steak Out. We're going to have my friend Dean and Sarah with us and he's going to speak on authentic manhood. Because what we find here in Genesis 3 is that Satan brings lies that create doubt in God's goodness that foster deception that ultimately leads to disobedience. And when Dean comes and speaks on authentic manhood, he'll be confronting the lies the world tells us about what it looks like to be a man, encountering those with the truth of the Gospel. You see, everything we do as a church and as individuals should reflect the reality that the story we live in should shape the strategy we live out. But this text doesn't just speak to a better sense of the shape of our story.

Look back with me now starting in verse 10 and the second big idea we'll see here. That Genesis 11 also reflects the shape of our identity. It reflects the shape of our identity. So the first half of Genesis here in Genesis 11 finishes with another genealogy. Why is that? Well, what we've seen each time we've looked at them is that it's showing us the way that God is keeping His promises. And the reason that the genealogy of Shem comes last in this text is because the Bible over and over again reserves last place in the genealogies for the chosen line. The one through which God is going to keep His promises. And I want you to see as we look deeper at this genealogy, how it helps us to understand the shape of our identity in Christ even more clearly. So, notice who this genealogy begins with. Look down in verse 11. It speaks about Shem again. And Shem lived after he fathered our Arpachshad 500 years and had other sons and daughters. So, our first encounter with Shem, Shem was back in Genesis 9. Remember, after Noah comes off the ark, he plants a vineyard. He has too much to drink from the fruit of the vine and he is laying on the ground, passed out, and naked. And Shem and his brother Japheth back into that tent and they cover over his nakedness. And Noah speaks a word of blessing on him. That Shem's tents will be enlarged and it's a preview of the reality that God



is going to bring the line of the Messiah through him. And that through Shem, those tents will grow greatly in anticipation of that coming Messiah. But there's something you might miss here in verse 11 about the significance of Shem if you're looking at passage in the English. So, notice with me his name in verse 11. His name is Shem? Do you know what Shem means in the original language? In the Hebrew, the word Shem is, the word Shem means name. In other words, his name is name. For any of you that are thinking about having babies in the future, I'm not sure if that would be the right fit for a boy or a girl. Just call 'em name and it will go in either direction. It could work in either way. Now, why is it that it's significant that Shem's name means name? Well, remember the answer to this by looking back with me at Genesis 11:4. We saw this last week. So, recall when the people are building the tower of Babel, it tells us in verse 4, why it is that they're seeking to do it. And it says this,

<sup>4</sup>Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves.

You see that? Make a name for ourselves. In other words, make a Shem for ourselves. And so the text is setting up this contrast between those who want to make a name for themselves and those that want to make a name for God. You see, the people of Babel seek to make a name for themselves and they fail. But when God makes a name for Shem, he flourishes. There's a contrast going on here in the text. And when you zoom out from Shem and look at this genealogy as a whole. Think about how different it is from the ones we've already seen in chapter 5 or chapter 10. Look at the genealogies in chapter 5 or chapter 10, it's like a who's who of the Bible. I mean, you think about the familiar names in Genesis 5. People like Adam and Enoch and Methuselah and Noah. Or you think about some of the significant figures that are showing up there in Genesis chapter 10 with folks like Egypt and the Philistines and Assyria and Canaan. It's a who's who of people that show up all throughout the Bible. And then all of a sudden you come to Genesis 11 and it's like Genesis 11 is not a who's who of the Bible but more like a who's he? Who are these people? Why are they here? What's the significance? And that's what I want us to wrestle with today. What are we supposed to take away from a genealogy about people we've never heard of? That have done things we've never known about. What difference does it make? Well, in order to answer that question, we have to peel the layer back one more and ask ourselves the question, why did God put their names in the Bible in this place to begin with? And the that they show up here is not connected to the moments that they achieve but to the Messiah they conceive. Because through this line of people recorded here it advances to Abraham and to Isaac and then to Jacob and then ultimately to David and eventually to that son of David, Jesus Christ. So their significance, the reason they appear in the book of life is not because of what they've accomplished, not because of their credentials, but because of their connection to Jesus. In other words, the reason they show up is because of ordinary faithfulness invested in an extraordinary mission. That's why they're there. These people, we would never otherwise know about show up in Genesis 11 because of ordinary faithfulness to an extraordinary mission. And just think about the way that that holds true in a day like today where everyone around us is seeking to make a name for themselves, to rise to prominence. And what drives it is this fear of insignificance, this fear of irrelevance, this fear of being forgotten. We saw it last week in that pull towards pride. We all want to find ways to matter, to make a difference, to be remembered. And yet here are these ones who are actually remembered and celebrated in the Bible and it's not because of their extraordinary fame but they're ordinary faithfulness.

Now, think about what that has to do with you and me today. See, Genesis 11 is giving us a model to live by. Genesis 11, when it speaks about the shape of our identity, is calling us to ordinary faithfulness combined with a next generation focus all for the sake of Jesus Christ. Or to save more simply, it's a pull, a call, a model towards ordinary faithfulness invested in an extraordinary mission. And that has everything to do with the way we live from Sunday to Saturday. What that means is all the ordinary things you do, when you do them, recognizing that you're in Christ and doing it for His kingdom, it transforms their significance. Every diaper you change. Every assignment you complete. Every carpool line you drive through. Every awkward conversation you have with somebody's name at church, you can't really remember. Each of those ordinary moments have significance, not just for you, but for the sake of the kingdom if we do it in light of the extraordinary mission, that God has called us to. And that's one of the reasons why I cannot wait for the way that we're about to kick off what we're doing on Wednesday night starting this week. You're going to see a slide up on the screen that just gives you a short recap of all the offerings we've got for adults. And what I want to challenge to think about is if God is calling us to ordinary faithfulness, how do we get there? And what I want to suggest to you is we don't get there by showing up for two hours a week on Sunday. That you will thrive best in ordinary faithfulness if you continue to grow in Christ and continue to pursue Him. Every other day of the week, you're filled with things that pull you in other directions. And I want to challenge you to prayerfully consider how God might be calling you to grow in ordinary faithfulness through the way that we're expanding and enhancing our Wednesday nights. So, starting this Wednesday, we're going to have a preview for the whole semester where you can get more information about these five options. In the past, we've only had one thing going on on Wednesday nights for adults and now, there will be five. We'll have our training program kicking off with about 100 people spending two semesters together going deeper into God's word. We'll have our Bible studies both for men and for women. We're going to have our Re:engage marriage ministry happening on Wednesday nights. We're going to have support groups, both for those wrestling with grief and then a monthly group for those that are adoptive or fostering parents, just to support those in our community that are in that life situation. And then we'll also have our worship ministry rehearsals taking place at those times. And the reason that is happening is because our deepest passion as a church is to help equip you to grow in Christ not so that you can make a name for yourself but so that you can make Jesus's name great instead. That you would not spend your life seeking extraordinary fame but find yourself pursuing ordinary faithfulness. A faithfulness that shows up by walking with Jesus, by serving Jesus, by pouring yourself out for Him. Everyone around you will tell you, you need to find a way to live so that you'll be remembered in a way that outlast yourself.

But when we come across these names like Reu and Serug and Eber and all of these here in Genesis 11, it's giving us a different picture. That the call of the Gospel is to not live in a way where you'll be remembered but to live in a way where He'll be remembered. To live in such a way where your name won't be made great but that His name will be made great. Everyone of us is going to die and be forgotten. The question is, will we give ourselves over to something that will outlast ourselves? It's one of the reasons I have kept that picture of that stationary I showed you the beginning. I've kept that picture and a piece of that stationary in my office. As a reminder to me that I'm not living my life to make my name great. That instead I'm living my life to make His name great. And that's the pull that Genesis is driving us to. The shape of our identity is understood in our connection to Jesus. It was true of them in this genealogy and He

calls it to be true of us in our daily lives today. Now notice with me how this chapter ends. The last portion of this genealogy is filled with a few more familiar names. So, we'll start down in verse 27. We're going to see a third big idea here in the passage that Genesis 11 also reveals the shape of our future. So, let's look at that shape of our future right here in the passage.

<sup>27</sup>Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. <sup>28</sup>Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred in Ur of the Chaldeans. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>Now Sarai was barren; she had no child. <sup>31</sup>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. <sup>32</sup>The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

Now, I want you to notice how this passage starts. You see the beginning of verse 27? Is there a familiar phrase there? There it is again. These are the generations. Highlight it. The *Toledot* shows up one more time as it sets the stage for this genealogy of Terah that culminates in Abram. This is our seventh slice of Genesis. And when this shows up, this final genealogy here gives us a glimpse into three familiar faces in the Bible. The first one see back there. In verses 27 and in 31, it speaks about Abram's father, Terah. So, where does Terah want to live? Look back at the end of verse 31. It says, 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. We don't know why they settled there. You wonder Haran. Abram's uncle died, could they have come to that place and when he died, they just decided to settle there. We have no idea exactly the reason but here's what we know. They wanted to go into Canaan but they couldn't. But even though Terah couldn't enter into Canaan, the heart of Canaan entered into him. I want you to see what I mean on the screen. Uh this verse comes from Joshua 24 in verse 2. Listen in the way that when Joshua is renewing the covenant with Israel after they've gone into the promised land through the conquest, look at how he speaks of Terah here. Joshua 24:2 says,

<sup>2</sup>And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham, and of Nahor.

Now, notice this last part,

and they served other gods.

So, what is Terah known for? This man that shows up here in Genesis 11, resurfaces when Joshua's renewing the covenant as a warning. Terah, his family, they served other gods. In other words, right here in Genesis 11, in the life of Terah, we had the first known example of idolatry in the Bible. That they are there worshiping other gods. Now, why is that significant? It's because this is showing us a pattern that will continue in the future of the Bible and all the way into our lives. If Genesis 11 is giving and revealing the shape of our future, part of that future is the ongoing battle against the temptation and pull to worship other gods. Terah encountered it. Israel encounters it when they enter into Canaan. That's why it's all the more significant that Moses is writing about him because we believe he was writing this this book of



Genesis while Israel was in the wilderness waiting to go into Canaan where they would be surrounded by this idolatry. Unless we think that it's different now, those idols just look differently today in our own culture and in our own hearts. It's showing us the shape of our future battle with idolatry here in the life of Terah. But notice the next familiar name there back in verse 29. You'll also see Sarai. Sarai is Abram's wife and look at what it says about her in verse 29.

<sup>29</sup>And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai.

Now, look down in verse 30.

<sup>30</sup>Now Sarai was barren. She had no child.

Now this moment when we read about her in the text should send off all sorts of alarm bells for us. Because it's very unusual and distinct. It's very rare in the Bible that a woman is mentioned in a genealogy. In fact, in ancient near Eastern history, that would be very rare. But even more usual is it's not just a woman. But as verse 30 points out, a barren woman. And think about how little that would make sense on the face of it, right? I mean, the whole point of a genealogy is to recount the way that a family-line advances. If you haven't noticed, family lines can't advance through barren women. Why would she be there? Well, it's because we find that in Genesis 17, we'll see in just a few weeks, that God takes the brokenness of her barrenness and He makes her womb new. And through that womb, she brings forth a son. That son who would set the stage for the coming of Jesus. We see how God keeps His promises in the midst of brokenness. And those promises throughout most of the Bible find their centerpiece and focal point on the way that this next person, Abram, points ahead to the coming of Jesus Christ, the offspring of Abraham. So, look back at verse 31 and let me apologize now because between now and the next few weeks there's bound to be times where I'm supposed to call him Abram where I'll refer to him as Abraham. Because that's what we all think of him as once God renames him so hopefully I won't get that mixed up too much. But for now look at verse 31, the way it speaks about Abram. It says,

<sup>31</sup>Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, Haran, and his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and what did they do? They went forth together from the Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there.

There's this interesting sequence in the genealogies that appear in Genesis 1 through 11 that you might not notice on the face of it. In Genesis 5, when it recounts the genealogy from Adam to Noah, that's 10 generations. And now, if you were to add up the generations between Noah and Abram, guess how many? 10 generations. See the way that God's at work? And the ways He's at work is through this man named Abram. And what we'll find as we study his life over the next few weeks is God gives him several gifts that not just change the trajectory of his life but the trajectory of the world itself. As he sets the stage for the coming of the Messiah, He gives him a new name. He gives him a new home and He gives him a new hope all rooted in a new promise. But before we close this morning, I just want you to think about how unexpected it is that God would choose someone like Abram to advance His purposes. Why would He welcome him into His family? Why would he invite him into His mission? I mean, think about it. Here's

a man who comes from a pagan family. They're not seeking after the God of the Bible. They're running after the gods of the world. Living a life of sin. They're experiencing the brokenness of it. You can see it in the death of his uncle, Haran. You can see it in the barrenness of his wife. There are all sorts of obstacles that should prevent a man like Abram from coming to God. To changing his life to live a life after God. He's got these major barriers of sin and his circumstances that should put a wall between him and the pursuit of God. But what this text shows us is the significant issue is not whether Abram pursues God but the reality that God pursues Abram. And in the midst of his sin, in the midst of his brokenness, the one that people might least expect to turn to God, God turns to him. He pursues him. He calls him. He makes a covenant with him. He welcomes him into His family and it changes everything for Abram and for the life of the world. And for those of you that are in the room or maybe catching this online, you may find yourself this morning in a similar spot to Abram. You might be the last one anybody would ever expect to be sitting in a church. You grew up in a broken home that wasn't pursuing after God. You've been through significant loss, through maybe through death, or through disappointment or disobedience. And you find yourself at this crossroads thinking, "Could God ever accept me? Could I ever turn my heart towards God?" And what Abram's story reminds us is that God is already turning His heart towards you through His Son, Jesus Christ. The offspring of Abraham, the one who fulfills the promises will come into your life and change everything. That through His life and His death and His resurrection, He has defeated the sin. He has overcome the brokenness that you sense that might hold you back from God. So, there's one question I want us to wrestle with as we close this morning. You see, the genealogy of Jesus, it starts with a couple, Adam and Eve, walking in the presence of God in the garden. And it advances through these genealogies like right here in Genesis 11 from a couple walking in the presence of God now to a couple in Joseph and Mary swaddling the presence of God in the manger. And the beauty of the Gospel is that for each one of us that put our trust in Jesus Christ, we're welcomed into the family. We are given a new name. Our names are written in the Book of Life because we've trusted in Jesus Christ. And the question I leave before each one of you this morning is, are you a part of the family of God in Jesus Christ? Let's pray together.

Father, as we wrestle with that reality, we're reminded of the words we've already sung this morning, Lord, that we're no longer slaves to sin. That instead, we're a child of God. Lord, and I'm pleading on behalf of anybody who may not be part of Your family yet today, Lord, that You would use Your word, Your Spirit to show them their need of Jesus in a way that sets them free. And as we seek to walk faithfully and walk in obedience to Your call in our lives, Lord, I pray that we are confronted by the reality that Genesis 11 calls us to, of ordinary faithfulness. That we return that wherever you have us, seeking not to make a name for ourselves, but to make a name for Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.