



Sermon – 08/28/2022
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Verses Covered This Week

Genesis 12:10 – 20

Genesis 13:1 - 18

Matthew 2:13 - 15

Let's open our Bibles together back to Genesis chapter 12 this morning. And if you're a guest with us whether in the room or catching us online, welcome home. And I just want to say a special word of welcome home to all our college students. Will y'all let them know one more time how glad you are that they're back with us this semester? And if you're new to College Station, maybe you're new to Central. Let me just let you know what we're all about. We're a church that has a passion for every generation reaching the next generation. That's the heart of our church. We want to be a church that's centered on the Gospel, that's committed to the mission, that's connected in community. And if that resonates with you, maybe the Lord is bringing you to set down your spiritual roots here. Whether your family just moved to town or you're new to the dorm or to campus life. And what we do each week is come to God's word and ask Him by His Spirit to change our hearts. And right here, we're on the front end of this time in the story of Abram. And we saw last week the template for God's calling on Abram. I want you to notice up on the screen with me. We had a Vin diagram last week that showed you the different dimensions of this. That the picture here of this calling is one of people, place, and purpose. The vision that God lays out for our calling in life is He calls God's people to live out God's purpose in God's place. So, if last week we saw the template of that calling; what we're going to find this morning is the testing of that calling. In other words, after Abram receives this call from God, it's not a happily ever after story. There's difficulty that emerges. There's danger. There's hardship that goes hand in hand with the heights of God's calling on his life. And as we make sense of these tests that Abram faces, it will give us a better window into the test that you and I face today as we seek to live out God's calling for our life.

So, let's pick up in the text. We're going to start down in Genesis chapter 12 in verse 10. Here's what it says.

¹⁰Now, there was a famine in the land. So, Abram went down to Egypt the sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. ¹¹When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, ¹²and when the

Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. ¹³Say you are my sister, and it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake." ¹⁴When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep and oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels. ¹⁷But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸So Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this that you have done to me? Why did you not tell that she was your wife?" ¹⁹Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her and go. ²⁰And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.

Let's pray together this morning.

Father, as we come to Your word, I imagine that there are some that find themselves in a situation that they just like Abram; facing adversity, facing challenges, facing difficulties. And so often the pull of our lives in those moments is to turn away from You, to depend on ourselves, to rely on our own strength, God. But I pray that You would show us a better way today. I pray that You would give us a clearer sense of what You've done for us in Christ. In whose name we pray. Amen.

Well they say you never get a second chance to make a first impression. And that's exactly how Antonio Sena felt when he got a call that he wasn't expecting down in Brazil. And right as the pandemic was getting going, Sena had been out of work. He was a pilot with no flights to be made. And so when this call came in for a delivery that was to be made deep in the Amazon rainforest, he was excited about the chance to start working again and to make a good impression. And so he loaded up his cargo and Sena took off from the airport. And he was flying thousands of feet over the canopy of this rainforest when disaster struck. His single engine Cessna Plain, all of a sudden, the engine quit working. And all he could do was try to figure out the best place to glide that plane down for a crash landing. He spotted a place that he thought was a place where there was a riverbed because palm trees were growing up and they grow near water. And so he pointed his plane in that direction and the crash came. And much to his surprise Sena survived the wreckage. But that's when real hardship began. You see, he was more than 60 miles away from civilization. He had no means to communicate or to radio for help. There was no one around him. That is, until the rescue planes began to circle around his region. But they never could see him under the canopy of trees and they went off and he realized he was left to fend for himself. And for the next 36 days, Sena sojourned through the forest looking for civilization. He was avoiding anacondas. He was sparring with the spider monkeys that kept coming and destroying his place where he was staying each night as he built a camp. He was seeking to live off the land. And think about what happened here. A calling led to a crisis that tested his commitment. That's what we see in the life of Sena as we think through this story and that's precisely what we're going to see unfold in a more significant way in the life of Abram today. He receives the calling. He faces the crisis. And with that crisis comes a test. A test of his commitment. A test of his character. A test of his convictions. And so think about what's happening here. We're getting the first glimpse of Abram after the calling of God. And we might expect that the calling of God would be followed by the comfort of God. But instead,

the calling is not followed by comfort but a crisis. And as we see how Abram responds to this crisis, it reveals to us how you and I should handle the two tests we will often face when seeking to live out God's calling for our life. And I want to show you the first one back beginning in verse 10. We're going to see first that our calling is tested by adversity. It's tested by adversity. So, when we pick up there in verse 10, we go from the height of Abram's calling that collides now with the hardship of Abram's circumstances. And the text shows us the circumstances. When? There's a famine in the land and it's almost hard for you and I to understand this when we can go to the local grocery store and get anything we need, anytime we wanted. But maybe rewind the clock to the start of the lockdown during COVID where you couldn't find certain supplies and there was that sense of desperation and need. Multiply that significantly and that's what he was facing, verse 10 tells us, this sense of famine. And what happens here is that this adversity fosters a famine of faith in his heart. The adversity leads to anxiety. This crisis that he encounters seeks, causes him to seek the blessing of God apart from the design of God. He turns downward towards Egypt rather than upward towards God for his provision. And so we see this crisis, this test of adversity shows up in several ways in his life that you and I still have to confront today.

So, back there in verse 10, we see first that adversity test our trust in God's protection for us. It tests our trust in God's protection. So, look at what verse 10 says.

¹⁰Now, there was a famine in the land. So, Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.

So, the famine in the land drives him to fear rather than faith. The famine of food is compounded by the famine of faith. His adversity fuels his anxiety. And in that moment we find that he is not just seeking protection from the famine but also protection from his family. So, look at the way the text goes on. Verses 11 and 12 show us that he's afraid, he'll be killed because of his wife's good looks. It gives new meaning to that phrase, if looks could kill. He doesn't want to find out. And so he hatches this plan. We see it right there in verse 13. What does he want her to do? Say, "You are my sister. That it would may go well with me because of you. That my life may be spared for your sake." And if you peel back the layers here, the root issue is that he is carrying out deception for the sake of protection. He wants her to lie for the sake of his livelihood. And this is a pattern that's not unique to Abram. I mean, when you sweep through Genesis, you see it over and over again from Adam here to Abram to Isaac, to Esau and Jacob, even to Joseph's sons or Joseph's brothers later on; deception for the sake of protection. Now, I need you to know, if you're new to our church, we are passionate about helping marriages in our church thrive. And one of the ways we do that is starting this Wednesday night. We have our Re:engage marriage enrichment ministry that's ideal for any of you married couples to step into. For you young adults, we also have Merge, our premarital counseling class. And you maybe wondering if whether or not this is for you. Would you be the right fit? Well, if you're a guy in here and it's ever crossed your mind that it might be helpful to your marriage to pretend that your wife is your sister, then think they could be really good fits for you. Abram needed some Re:engage right at this time. But you are sitting there in the audience and you're thinking to yourself, I would never do that. But the reality is in our relationships, we so often find ourselves embodying the exact heart behind Abram's fear that drives him to self-protection. And what is it? He begins to see his wife as a means to an end. As someone to be used to make his life better. As a risk to be managed. Now, am I hitting a

little closer to home? Because in those relationships, in those marriages, we can begin to see a spouse in the exact same way. See, Abram is tested at the level of his desire for protection. But it doesn't stop there. Let's keep going.

Down in verse 14 we also see how adversity test our trust in God's provision. So, not just protection but provision. So, verses 14 and 15 confirm that Abram was right. Because when he comes there and he presents his wife as his sister, the leaders there in the country see how beautiful she is. They bring her into Pharaoh's family and make her one of his wives, exactly as he predicted. And look what happens as a result of that down in verse 16. It says,

¹⁶And for her sake, he dealt with Abram and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

So, we see here not just deception for the sake of protection but deception for the sake of provision and it works. He uses her as a means to an end. And that end is he gets the provision he was seeking. He fled from the promised land in the famine. He went down to Egypt seeking provision and now he has it at last. Now what he wanted is his. He receives the blessing God promised but he does it apart from the path that God prescribed. And where does this blessing come? It comes there in Egypt. Back when I was a student here at Texas A&M, I had the chance to work overseas in London for a semester. And I spent a week down in Egypt on a trip visiting a friend working at a church there. And I'll never forget flying into the Cairo Airport. That you're surrounded by this desert region. There's nothing but sand and barrenness all around you but yet right as you approach the city, it's like a switch flips and it goes from barren desert to abundant vegetation. And the reason that's able to be true is because that Nile River delta was so rich in resources. It could provide for those who made their homes surrounding it. How much more was that true during this time of famine in Abram's life? In Canaan, there is nothing. In Egypt, it seems like there is everything that he is looking for. And we find that draw towards provision in Egypt doesn't stop with Abram. It happens later on in the Old Testament. It happens with Joseph's brothers when the famine comes and they go down to Egypt seeking to find provision. It happens even with Israel after they're led out of Egypt in the Exodus. They are there in the wilderness and they're longing to go back to be slaves in Egypt so that they can eat the flesh pots they were provided. This longing for provision apart from God's prescription is exactly what we find showing up over and over again in Genesis and in all of human history. What you need to recognize is the reality underneath this is that adversity compromises Abram's authenticity. He turns himself into a liar for the sake of his livelihood. And let's not be deceived. That same pull can show up in our lives when we face adversity as well. Some of you are walking in here with a limp. You're struggling. You're facing a valley of despair or suffering or disappointment or hardship or secret sin that nobody else in this room has any idea about. And yet in the midst of that valley of adversity, you mask it in a way that makes it seem like everything's fine. How's your week been? Oh, it's great. Praise God. You put on this front to pretend as if everything's okay when really inside, you feel as if you're dying. It's because adversity tests us at the level of authenticity. It's one of the reasons why for you men, we're having our men stake out here in just a few Sundays on September 18th on Authentic Manhood. Because we want to confront the lies that the world tells us with the truth of the Gospel. So that we're not pulled towards direction of self-provision that we find right here in the story of Abram.

Well, let's see how the story unfolds here because as we go on to the end of the chapter, we see a third test he faces in adversity. It shows us how adversity test our trust in God's plan. It test our trust in God's plan. So, what happens next after he receives this abundance? Look back at verse 17.

¹⁷But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

So, get Pharaoh experiences plagues. Does that sound familiar? That show up anywhere else in the Bible? Just one book over in the book of Exodus before God takes Israel out towards the promised land. It shows up first here. And it's the first fulfillment of what we read last week in Genesis 12:3. Look back at the end of that verse. It tells us God will bless those who bless Abram. But look at the second half. It says, in him who dishonors you, I will curse. We see it for the first time right here. Abram, Pharaoh doesn't even realize that he is dishonoring Abram. He's unknowingly doing it as he's been deceived and yet the curse still falls upon him. So, how does Pharaoh react here to the curse that comes? Well look back at the text in verses 18 and 19. We see he responds with both indignation and interrogation. He's angry. He confronts him. He questions him. Why would you do this to me? Why would lie? Why would you deceive me and bring this hardship upon me? And notice, we don't get an answer to those questions here. But we do get an answer to what happens next to Abram down in verse 20 when it says,

²⁰And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.

And notice that last phrase, all that he had. Abram shows up to Egypt in crisis. He runs from God walking by sight and not by faith. He depends on his own deception for his protection and his provision. He seeks God's blessing apart from God's design and yet God blesses him anyway. As one of the scholars I read this week said it, the blessing doesn't depend on Abram's conduct but God's covenant. He's going to be faithful to the promise even when we are not. And that's precisely what we find here in the life of Abram; that he turns away from God but God doesn't turn away from him. And I want you to think about what this means for the whole story of Scripture. That in this moment, we have Abram fleeing to Egypt, running from God's protection. But there's another story that has echoes of this in the New Testament in Matthew chapter 2 beginning in verse 13. You'll see this the verses on the screen here in just a minute where Jesus has just been born and the text tells us that Herod, the ruler in that area, was seeking to kill the Jewish babies that had just been born to try to destroy this rival before he can rise to power. And what happens? Jesus and his family flee to Egypt; not fleeing from God's protection but fleeing to God's protection. God rescues them from the enemy. And look at the way that Matthew 2 beginning in verse 13 describes it.

¹³Now when they departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt and there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy Him." ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. Get this. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt, I called my son."

So, think about what happens here. In Genesis 12, God calls his son Abram out of Egypt. Later on in the Exodus, we see that God calls his son, the nation of Israel, out of Egypt. And right here in fulfillment of this pattern, in fulfillment of the prophet's words in the book of Hosea, God calls his son, Jesus, the son of Abraham out of Egypt. It's laying down markers now for what God is going to do in the Gospel. That just as Israel fled from the slavery of Egypt and ran towards the promised land through the provision that God made in the Exodus, that's exactly what he does for us in His Son. He takes that sin that has enslaved us, the guilt that holds us down, the weight that so easily entangles us. And by the forgiveness offered through the blood of Jesus Christ, He sets us free. He rescues us out of the Egypt of our sin. He calls us into the promised land of His new creation because if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. God is faithful even when we're faithless. And even when Abram is running from God's design, God continues to fulfill the blessing in the midst of the adversity. But that's just only one of the two tests that we see here in the passage. Because it's not just a test of adversity, now, picking up in verse 13, the second test of our calling that we need to recognize is this, our calling is tested by abundance, by abundance. Both adversity and abundance. So, pick up with me now in verse 1 of chapter 13. It says,

¹So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him into the Negev. ²Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold. ³And he journeyed on from the Negev as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, ⁴to the place where he had made an altar at first. And there Abram called upon the name of the Lord.

So, adversity's not the only way our calling is tested. It's also tested through abundance. So, if adversity tests us at the level of our anxiety, abundance tests us at the level of apathy. When we find ourselves in moments of abundance, we feel as if we have no need for God. That everything is great. That I'm providing for myself. That I don't need to rely on Him. And Abram is going to face that same test as he comes back from Egypt. Yes, as verse 1 tells us, he is carrying back all of the spoil he plundered from the Egyptians. But in addition to his great wealth, he is also carrying back great wounds. He might have survived that adversity but it left scars. And isn't that so often true of the adversity that you and I face? We may make it through the circumstances but we carry the scars that go with them. And what we need to recognize here is we're facing this test of abundance, is that so often the calling of God is met with a crisis and on the other side of that, it's a test of our commitments, our character, our conviction. And nowhere is that facing a greater test than in abundance.

So, let's think through these three different tests that abundance brings to us. We'll see starting there in verse 1, abundance tests our commitment to our calling. So, Abram goes down to Egypt in adversity but verse 2 tells us he comes up in abundance. Notice what it says. Now Abram was very rich in livestock in silver and in gold. Yeah, I think Abram would've fit in really well right here in Texas. Because he knew what it was like to live in a boom and a bust cycle. Just like so many of us who are dependent on the oil and gas industry for that. Can't you picture him in some cowboy boots or a big belt buckle to go with it? And so he comes back to the promised land in an entirely opposite situation from when he left. He left with nothing, he comes back with seemingly everything. And notice what happens here. When we face abundance, it can tempt us to forget our past, to overlook our adversity, to not remember the times of trial that we faced in our previous seasons of our life. As a result of that, abundance can tempt us to

compromise our calling. And that compromise happens perhaps most clearly at the level of our commitments. Abram is facing that exact pull. He can leave Egypt behind. He can pretend like he doesn't need God anymore because he's got everything he thinks that he needs. And yet Abram resists the test to compromise his commitment. Instead, we find here in verses 3 and 4 that he retraces his way back to his homeland and he reignites his worship of God. And I want you to just put yourself in Abram's shoes for a minute. As you're sojourning back from the land, you went down with next to nothing. You're coming back with almost everything. And as you go, you're beginning to get closer to where you had previously lived. This land that God had promised for you that you had fled from in despair, in fear, in anxiety, and now you're back. And you don't know what you're coming back to. There's no way to lock the doors back in the ancient near east. There's no way to ensure that all your belongings, all the things that are important to you, would still be in place. But when he shows up where he was before, he is greeted by a familiar sight and I want you to see it again in verse four. Notice what he finds. It says, he came to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there, Abram called upon the name of the Lord. So, even though Abram had abandoned this altar in adversity, he returns to this altar in the midst of his abundance. He comes back, and you can imagine him seeing it and be reminded of the first worship he gave to God when that calling originated in his life and he has a restoration of his commitment to God. He's all in on God's calling in his life even in the midst of the abundance.

Now, we have yet again a partial fulfillment of that Genesis 12 promise we saw last week. That God's people are now back in God's place living out God's purpose. But then another test comes. Another test of abundance shows up here. When abundance tests our character in our calling. So, let's pick up beginning in verse 5 and see that test of character here.

⁵And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, ⁶so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, ⁷and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. At that the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land.

So, how'd they resolve it? Verse 8 tells us.

⁸Then, Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we're kinsmen. ⁹Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right. If you take the right hand, I will go to the left." ¹⁰And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This is before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹So, Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus, they separated from each other. ¹²Abram settled into the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. ¹³Now, the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

So, what happens here when they return to the land with such great riches? Well, let's zero in there at the end of verse 6. It says, their possessions were so that they could not dwell together. And verse 7 says, and there was strife. More sheep, more strife. It's like an ancient version of

“no, money, no problems”. They’ve got this issue when they come back to the promised land. And with the adversity, the famine, it strained Abram’s resources. Now, with abundance, it strains his relationships. This nephew that he’s been shepherding through all this difficult time after the loss of his father, after the famine that’s to come. It now seems as if everything’s going good with their family but the abundance leads, in a sense, to greater adversity. And it leads to a crisis that tests Abram’s character in the midst of that abundance. How does that play out? Well, where do we see that test? Look back in the contrast between the way that Abram handles his strife and Lot handles his strife. So, you’ll notice back in verses 8 and 9, that what Abram does is he gives Lot the choice of the land. You take the right, I’ll take the left, you take the left, I’ll take the right. As a dad of four boys, this is like the most brilliant move ever. What we do at our home, if two kids want the same thing and it’s gotta be split in half. You have kid number one, be the one to divide it in half. Kid number two, picks which half they want. So that everybody’s trying to get it as precise as possible. So, he gives them the choice. The left hand or the right hand. You have that selection. And I want you notice what’s implied there, what’s embedded about the character of Abram in that moment. I mean, think about it. Abram is the one with the power. He’s the one with the authority. He’s the elder statesman in the family. He deserves the first choice. And yet he selflessly lays that down. He doesn’t seek his own interest. He considers the interest of others. In other words, he’s embodying the kind of character that it should be going hand in hand with God’s calling. But you see quite a different picture from Lot in verse 10, don’t you? Look back at what it says.

¹⁰And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord.

And what you need to understand is while this land was appealing, it was also just outside the land that God had promised to his people. And so what Lot does is he lifts up his eyes and sees. It’s an echo of language that we find in Genesis 3 when Eve lifts up her eyes and sees that the fruit on the tree is good for food and a delight to the eyes. It’s exactly what he notices when he looks around at this forbidden land. And what Lot does is he chooses earthly success over his eternal calling. He puts his desires, his delights, ahead of God’s design. Can you see the difference in the character on display there? One who gives selflessly for the sake of others and the other who takes of the best for his own benefit. And here’s the key I want you to notice as we look at this part of the passage. When you compromise your character in a moment, it can create a danger you’ll compromise it for an entire season. And that’s what we find in the life of Lot. If you’ll look down there in verse 12, at the very end of it there’s this phrase that’s just tucked in as he settles in there and he moves to this new place. It says that he moved into that valley, look at the end of it, as far as Sodom. And in the original language, what that’s actually conveying is he moved as close as possible to Sodom. He got as close as he could without being in the city. And why does that matter? Well, verse 13 tells us why. Verse 13 says,

¹³Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

And here’s what’s incredible. In the original language, it’s setting up a contrast. So, look with me back at verse 3 for a second. At the at the beginning place where Abram and Lot would have traveled back to. It tells us that they were living as close as possible to a city named Bethel. And in the original language, the city Bethel is a city that means the house of God. And can’t you just see the metaphorical picture that they have come back to the land and they’re living as

close to the house of God as possible. And think about what Lot does. He goes from living as close as possible to the house of God to now living as close as possible to the city of sin. In Sodom. When he compromises his character for a moment and chooses forbidden land, what happens as a result of that is it doesn't just bring a danger to his character then but for the next season. Because now instead of being at the doorstep of the house of God, he's at the doorstep of the house of sin. It's there in his midst. It's always around him. Seeking to lead him astray and compromising his character. And let that echo as a warning to each of us. That there can be this temptation to find ourselves asking the question, how can I, how close can I get to crossing the line into sin and still be okay? That can happen with what you do behind closed doors with your boyfriend or girlfriend. It can happen with what you do with your, with the friends that you select. It can happen to do with the job you focus on. It can happen in so many different areas. And the warning that Lot gives to us is that when we push the boundaries, when we push the limits as he does, it puts us in a position of spiritual danger.

But there's one more thing I want you to notice in the last part of this passage. A final challenge, a final test that abundance brings to us when we see that abundance also test our convictions in our calling. So, notice this test of convictions here as we read through the end of the chapter beginning in verse 12, or verse 14, it says,

¹⁴The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, ¹⁵for all the land that you see I will give you and to your offspring forever. ¹⁶I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. ¹⁷Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you. ¹⁸So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

So, now, we find that as the story returns to Abram, it shows us how he resist the pull of abundance by renewing his conviction to the promises that God has already made him. I mean, you'll notice, look at back at the phrase right there at the end of verse 14, that when God starts speaking to him, look at the phrase it begins with, "Lift up your eyes and look." Well, when you look back at chapter 13 in verse 10 and what Lot did to the land, it's the exact same phrase in the original language. Lot lifted up his eyes and looked to the land. He looked to the plenty. Now, instead of looking to the plenty, Abram looks to the promise. Instead of looking at the land, he looks to the Lord. And notice what happens in that moment. It shows that he rejects the convictions that Lot embodied in looking out for himself. And instead embraces the convictions that brought him to the promise to begin with. Because right there in that moment, you'll see what happens in the aftermath in verse 15. That renewed convictions go with the renewed promise when it says, for all the land that you will see, I will give to you and your offspring forever. This is the exact same calling we saw back in chapter 12 of God's people living in God's place called the live out God's purpose. But there's something new that happens here. For the first time in verse 16, God gives a sense of the scope and the scale of this promise when he says in 16,

¹⁶I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.

And when we hear that word dust that should catch our attention because if we were to go all the way back to Genesis 2:7, the dust of the ground is what God uses in the formation of humanity. And now when he's speaking about the formation of a covenant with humanity, how does He describe it? With the same word, dust. That as the dust surrounds the earth, so the earth will be surrounded by the offspring of Abram, the people of God. This truth about the dust of the earth hit me in a fresh way because recently. We were doing a construction project at our house and the workers that were over there had to get up into our attic in order to work on a portion of it. And I wasn't home at the time but Cami was. She was at the other end of the home and all of a sudden, while they were working, she heard a loud crashing sound, and knew something had just gone terribly wrong. And she raced down the hallway into the room where they would have been working right above her in the attic. And when she looked up, she saw a man's shoe sticking through our ceiling. A misstep had led to a fall. That fall had caused debris and drywall to flood the ground. But the worst part of it was there was dust everywhere. Which was multiplied when he yanked that shoe back up into the ceiling. And she had to spend countless hours collecting that dust. And every time she probably thought she had it all cleaned up there was more to be found. And the reality is what dust does. It goes everywhere. It pervades everything. It touches every dimension of life in a broken world. And what happens here is when God speaks of the offspring of Abram that is to come, He uses this picture of dust to symbolize the way that he will raise up sons and daughters of Abraham and send them out across the world. That everywhere you see dust in your home or around this church or up on campus or on the airplane that you get on on your business trip next week. It ought to be a reminder of this promise. That God is going to raise up a son of Abraham and through him will come spiritual descendants that will be so abundant upon the earth, it will be as if it is the dust covering the earth. That's the promise of the Gospel. That's the challenge of the great commission. The reason that you and I are called to go to a lost and dying world to make the name of Jesus known as the only hope of salvation. Is to see the fulfillment of the promise that God makes to Abram right here. We're called to mission. We're called to invest. And as that happens, it changes the way that we live. And if you look back at verse 17, it tells us that he says him, arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land for I will give it to you. And so Abram, in verse 18, move this tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre which are at Hebron and there he built an off an altar to the Lord. So, picture this moment. He marks out the land for him and he has him walk every step of that land. At our church, we bought the back 50 acres years ago before we made that purchase, Mike Walker, Bruce Boyd, and others walked every inch of that land. They came out with the sticker birds to prove it. He does that with this land to show him the inheritance that he will receive. Abram walks the land that he will one day inherit. And in that promise, in that picture, it's pointing ahead to a coming son of Abram. Jesus Christ, who comes, He takes on flesh and what does He do? He walks the land that He will inherit. He walks this Earth fully God, fully human, making payment for our sins through the perfect life that He lived and the glorious death He died and the unstoppable resurrection that He lives so that you and I, no matter whether we face abundance or adversity can find the fulfillment of that promise in Jesus Christ.

So, where do you find yourself this morning? Are you walking in a season of adversity or abundance? That's a question that I'm sure many of you are wrestling with. And I know when you think back to Antonio Sena, he was in the valley of adversity. That plane had crashed and he was wandering in the wilderness towards where he thought civilization might be. And he was traveling in the River Valley. But what Sanjay knew is that even though he was safest to walk

along the lowest part of the valley during the day, he needed to set his camp up in the hillside at night because, why? Predators are most active in the deepest part of the valley. There's a spiritual truth to that. And he sojourned for over a month and he was surrounded by sounds that he had never known before until one day as he was walking, he heard a sound that was familiar. It was the sound of a chainsaw. And when he heard that chainsaw, he must know that there was humanity in the distance. And as he built his camp that night, he prayed to God that he would hear that chainsaw sound the next day. When he woke up the next morning, he set off in that direction. And not long after that, he stumbled upon a woman by the name of Maria Tavares. She was there with her family who were a family of nut collectors and they were working in this part of the forest that they hadn't been in in over three years. And the only reason that they were there that day is because after her husband had died in the middle of the pandemic, their debts had become come to a point where their piling up and they needed to make money and they had to go deeper into the forest to pay for their debts. And that happen to put them at the right place at the right time when Antonio Sena walked out of those woods. Later on, Maria spoke to one of Sena's relatives and she had this to say. "We lost a life and you gained one. I suppose that's the way God wanted it." Think about that. We lost a life and you gained one. That's the way that God wanted it. The debt from the death caused them to expand their search and from the death of her husband, she was able to help a man who was as good as dead find life. And in a much greater way, isn't that the Gospel of Jesus Christ? That one man finds death so that you and I might find life. And what Genesis 12 and 13 is reminding us of here is exactly the words of Maria Tavares. It's because that's the way that God wanted him. And that's why we keep pressing on in the midst of abundance and adversity. Let's close now with the word of prayer as we turn our hearts back to God.

Father in the name of Jesus we know that often we are faced by difficulty and trial. And the greatest trial that we face is the pull of sin. The wages of that sin being death, Lord, and I'm asking now in this moment, if there are men or women in this room or watching online that have never turned to Christ in the midst of the adversity their sin creates in their life, I pray that today would be the day of salvation. And I pray that just as You promised that Your offspring will fill the earth as the dust of the earth. I pray that we would have that same heart for the nations here. To live life on mission so that we can stand firm for the sake of Your Gospel whether we're living in a moment of adversity or abundance. May we walk by faith just like Abram did. And we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.