Living Honorably by Honoring God

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Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0:00] In part of this chorus, it hits very much the issue of what we'll be dealing with this morning. Oh, how strange and divine that I can sing all is mine.

You possess everything in Jesus Christ, and yet in your life right now, do you own everything? No. There are still many things that need to be fulfilled. And yet, we live in the here and now under the promise that all the treasure of heaven is ours in Jesus Christ who lives in us.
All of it. Every bit of it. But there's still much of it that God will give to us when we get to see Jesus as He is. This is much of what Abraham and his wife Sarah have faced throughout their life together in their married life as they've waited on God's promise for decades.
So we want to look at that together this morning. Genesis chapter 23 is where we'll find ourselves. And the title of the message is Living Honorably by Honoring God.
[1:16] This is what we'll see in the life of Abraham. It's what we have seen in the life of Sarah. She will leave the scene, as we'll see.

And Abraham will continue to follow the Lord. I'm going to read through the passage. This is all of Genesis 23. Now, Sarah, Abraham's wife, lived 127 years.
These were the years of the life of Sarah. Sarah died in Kariot Arba. Kariot Arba. That is, we know it as today, Hebron.
In the land of Canaan. And Abraham went up, Abraham went up to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. Then Abraham rose from before his dead and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner among you.
Give me a burial site, a grave among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. The sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, Hear us, my Lord.
[2:27] You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our graves. None of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead.

So Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. And then he spoke with them, saying, If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me.
And approach Ephron, the son of Zohar, for me. That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns, which is at the end of his field, for the full price.
Let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site. Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth, even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying, No, my Lord, hear me.
I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people, I give it to you. Bury your dead.
[3:41] And Abraham bowed before the people of the land. And he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, If you will only please listen to me, I will give the price of the field.

Accept it from me that I may bury my dead there. Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, My Lord, listen to me. A piece of land worth 400 shekels of silver, what is that between me and you?
So bury your dead. Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver, which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, 400 shekels of silver, commercial standard.
So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, in the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within the confines of its border, were deeded over to Abraham for a possession, in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.
After this, Abraham buried Sarah, his wife in the cave of the field, at Machpelah, facing Mamre, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan.

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[5:17] So the field and the cave that is in it, were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth.

Wow. Now, here's the question before us as you read this to start out with. We don't start with what does this mean for us.
We start out with what does Israel, why do they need to know this? What do they need to understand this for? Why is Genesis 23 in the Scriptures?
Alright, now remember what's going on in the life of these people who are hearing this as the original hearers for the first time from Moses. These people, as a nation, are poised on the banks of the Jordan River as they ready themselves to invade Canaan.
Israel is going to be God's judgment against the pagan people of this area. This is the promised land. Now, as this is read to them, they are hearing about their most beloved ancestor, Abraham, and they are hearing about how their lives are tethered to him.
[6:32] What does that mean? By God's holy promise to Abraham, the Israelites can and do know God. It is through Abraham that they are able to know the God that they know who is now leading them across the river Jordan into the promised land to possess it as an answer to God's promise to their ancestor.

Now, here's the thing. I'm going to put it up here on the screen. They are seeing the following truth about their God who's called them to this very moment as His people.
And this is what they're seeing spelled out before them in all these activities and commands of the Lord. Is anything too difficult for the Lord? Do you remember when he said that to Abraham?
Is anything too difficult for the Lord? That's the God that Abraham has served his entire life. That is the God now who is commanding this people as a nation, having delivered them from Egypt.
They have sojourned now. They've spent the 40 years wandering. Now they're ready to go in and possess the land. So the question that we want to ask at this point, again, we're getting our bearings and our references for understanding the context of this passage.
[7:51] Before we try to understand its application to our lives, we need to understand what it meant to the people who first heard it. This is extremely important information. And toward the end of my sermon, I'm going to tell you why it's important for our modern time.

We'll be talking about it as we go. But let's ask this question. How much time has gone by since Abraham's life and up to the moment when the Israelites now begin to conquer Canaan according to God's promise?
How much time has gone by? Well, here's what we'll do. Tracking from God making his promises to Abraham Abraham in Genesis 12.
That's when we read back in the day when we were dealing with it at that time that God called Abraham out of Ur, saved him, made him a God believer.
Remember, who was he worshiping before the Lord? Idols. What kind of idols? Remember, what was Ur all about? And then he went up the moon. His dad was a big time moon worshiper.
[8:58] And we went through all of that together and showed you different places that archaeologists have unearthed that were built as temples for them to do this moon worship. They found them and they found the evidence of what they did.

And these were the cities that Abraham and his family lived in. God called him out of all of that and made him a believer in Yahweh, the God of Israel. So how much time?
Well, if we track from the time that God made his covenant to Abraham in chapter 12 and then we move to the time that God is delivering the Israelites from Egypt, it comes out to this amount of time, 430 years.
430 years have gone by since God made the covenant to Abraham and now the people are standing on the banks of the Jordan get ready to possess the land that he promised to Abraham.
Now, if you'll look with me at Genesis 15, just give you a little more context here. Genesis chapter 15. Let's be careful in how we deal with these passages to make sure we understand the background of what's going on.
[10:08] We'll start in verse 13. Remember that God is renewing his covenant, refreshing Abraham and the covenant that he has made to him in Genesis 12.

Now he's going through a ceremony to kind of put a rubber stamp on all of it. And he comes down to verse 13. God said to Abram, this is before he changed his name to Abraham, Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and

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oppressed for 400 years.
Now that's Egypt, isn't it? But, he says, No for certain now, but I will also judge the nation whom they will serve and afterward they will come out with many possessions.
So that's happened. We're 40 years beyond that now in the context of Israel standing ready to invade. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace.
You will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation, they will return here for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.
[11:26] Alright, now eventually, this passage was understood as 430 years. If you look at Exodus, Genesis, Exodus, go to Exodus, if you would, chapter 12, and you'll see how the children of Israel understood this and lived this.

We'll let them be the experts telling us. Chapter 12 of Exodus, beginning in verse 40. Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years.
And at the end of 430 years to the very day, all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.
And this is that great host now after the 40 years of wandering and the generation has passed, this new generation of Israelites are ready to march in. And they're going to march in under the leadership of Joshua.
This is the timeline that we're dealing with. Now as the men of Israel stand ready to cross the Jordan, they're going to have to fight. They're going to be warriors and soldiers. They're going to have to fight to take the land which God promised to them 430 years ago.
[12:41] This brand new fledgling nation, fresh off their wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, they need to be reassured that this is now God's time.

They need to know Genesis 23 because they need to see, here it is, we need or we are on God's timeline.
They need to stand there on the banks and they need to realize we are on God's timeline. Moses is rehearsing this and you can imagine standing there hearing this spelled out and then realizing all of this that's happening to us right now in real time was prophesied all those hundreds of years ago in Abraham, to Abraham, and here we are living it.
We're those people. This is the moment. We are right where God wants us. We are doing exactly what God would have us do.
In other words, friends, this is the big issue. God is with us. Now boy, I'd want to know that if I had a sword strapped to my side and I was getting ready to leave my family and go along and fight these people over there that the spies spied out 40 years ago and said we can't defeat these people.
[14:02] They're too big, too mighty, and too great. That's why they wandered, right? I would want to know God is with me before I went, whoosh, let's go get them, guys.

Yeah, you want to be bold. And that's why this is here in the Bible for them. Now, let's transition just a bit. Let's ask this question.
Why do we need to know this? All right, that's all fine and dandy for Israel. We're not Israel. No, we're not. And so what does this mean for us in our time? Well, you and I, we need to see God's greater promise made to us in Abraham and kept to us in Jesus Christ.
It's just the same as it was for the people standing on the banks. Promises were made to them in Abraham. Well, promises were made to us, too, in Abraham.
And we need to see this. Look, if God cannot or if God will not keep His promises to Abraham, then how can we trust Him to keep His promises to us?
[15:11] If God couldn't keep His promises to Abraham at that time, how could Israel have any confidences that God's going to show up when we need Him? And that's why it's important for them to stand there and say, God is with us right now.

This is all a God thing. This is His moment and His timing. We're His instrument. Does that sound familiar to you as a Christian? This is God living in me.
This is His moment. I am His instrument to be used as He wills. That's the Christian life. And now we're going to see that. This is why we need to know this.
Look at these scriptures that I've prepared for you. That in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to us, the Gentiles. so that we would receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith, just as Abraham did.

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And if you belong to Christ, then you, you are Abraham's descendants. You are heirs according to the promise. Do you see that? You are sitting here this morning as heirs of Abraham.
[16:17] You are heirs according to the promise made to Him. Because the deliverer was coming. And now He has come. And we're living on this side of the deliverer, rescuing us from sin and death.

But when the fullness of the time came, in God's moment, what happened? God sent forth His Son. Now's the moment. Born of a virgin.
Born of a woman. Born under the law. So that He might do what? Redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons.
Paul made a big deal about saying we've been grafted in. The Gentiles have been grafted in. We've been adopted into this wonderful family. The family who believes in the Lord and follows the Lord and trusts the Lord and reveres the Lord.
Whose entire life is defined by loving God and being loved by Him. This is who we are, folks. You were in the promise God made to Abraham thousands of years ago.
[17:23] Now this is a big God. This is the God we serve. Now listen to this. The moment, the very moment God forgave you for your sins was God's time for you.

For His promise to save you. So that you can now say, as Israel is saying in this passage, I'm on God's timeline.
I am in the moment of life God prepared for me. God has me right where He wants me to be. God is with me.
Now face life. Turn around and face what it is that God has for you. He's uniquely equipped you. This is your moment in the Lord. Pretty soon, like the flower that gets blown off the face of the earth and you can't even see where it was, that'll be us.
[18:24] But this is our moment. We're breathing. We get to herald Jesus to the world. We get to serve our church family and minister to our community.

You get to witness to your neighbors. You get to witness to the people in your sphere of influence every single day. Perhaps people I will never meet as your pastor. But you will meet them and you need to open your mouth and speak the truth in love to them about Jesus Christ.
Amen. Right. That is our privilege. That is our mandate to make disciples. You guys know that, and I won't belabor this, you guys know that we have established an international ministry.
Our little church has established an international ministry now years in the making with a local church in Poland. A beautiful church. Poyednania Church.
It means reconciliation church. And most of the congregations in Europe, but especially in Poland, are small congregations. So they're probably about, they're a little bigger than us.
[19:32] They're probably over 100 right now. And they're getting ready to start a church in Warsaw that we have been asked to help be a part of, support.

We are, Greg, Pastor Greg and I are currently discussing how we can bring even more of who we are and what we are umbilical then to ministering with them so that we are involved in our little church of helping to make disciples across the ocean.
We want to make them here and not neglect that. But we don't want to neglect being a part of what God's doing in other cultures and in other places. Folks, this is our privilege. And God is making a way for our little church to be involved in this.
And you're about to be brought in even more. You've supported Suzanne and I in this work and we are so thankful that you are doing that because it's taken us some years to build the foundation that we're now going to build upon.
God is with us. I'll put it up here on the screen. This is the life of a God-fearer. Now you know, if you've been here, I've been making a big deal out of the text that we've been looking into about fearing the Lord, being a God-fearer.
[20:43] We've done some Ecclesiastes and that was because of what God said about Abraham as he went to sacrifice Isaac. Let me get to it. In chapter 22, if you'll look with me, Genesis 22, verse 12, as Abraham stretched out his hand, in verse 10, to plunge the knife down into Isaac, the angel of the Lord came and said, Abraham, Abraham, and he stopped him.

And in verse 12, do not stretch out your hand against the lad and do nothing to him, for now I know that you fear God. You reverence me. And so Abraham, the God-fearer, this is what God has been molding him into all of these years, a God-fearer.

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Now the question is, up here on the screen, can you say that about yourself? I hope you can. Because you should be able to if you're a believer trusting in the Lord Jesus alone for the forgiveness of your sins.
If you're a Christian, you're a God-fearer. Now to what degree are you a God-fearer? Well that's your progressive sanctification. Your growth or maturity in Jesus over the course of your life. Some people, they don't grow much because they don't put much into it. You're always going to remain saved, but there are levels of growth that we all experience. And so this is what this is speaking to.
[22:06] Are you a God-fearer growing in the Lord? Folks, it's a wonderful privilege to have the spiritual confidence that you're living your entire life for the good, glory, honor, and pleasure of God who gave His Son to you.

What a privilege! It's what marks you out from everybody else in the world. As I lived as an unbeliever and you did and God marked us out, He saved us.
Have you ever asked, why me? Yeah, I have too. So here's a question. What are you doing with God's gift of His Son given for you?
How are you showing God the thankfulness of your heart to Him for keeping His promise to save you from sin, from death, and from hell?
Alright, you think about that for a moment. It's a question that should sober each one of us or a series of questions that should sober each one of us. Now let's look into how all of this relates to what I'm wanting to show you in the life of Abraham.
[23:18] Let's look at how this particular passage, Genesis 23, reflects honoring God by honorable living. We are called to honor God. Friends, please hear me.

You know that. You know that we're called to honor and glorify God. Alright? You cannot do that apart from an honorable life. You can't live like hell and expect other people to see you living like heaven.
It doesn't work that way, does it? And so we're all called to an honorable life in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to bring honor to Him as the Lord Jesus Christ.
This is what we want to look at. So we begin where the text helps us begin in Abraham's life of showing honor to the Lord God. Remember the title.
All of this honorable living is about bringing honor to God. And where does Abraham start? Right up here on the screens. Abraham honors his wife. He was married. He honors his wife.
[24:26] If you look at it with me again, now Sarah lived 127 years. These were the years of the life of Sarah. Whenever the Bible spends time repeating things like that, we need to pay attention.

Sarah died in Kiriath Arba, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan. And Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. Two verses loaded.
Packed with meaning for the Israelite people. The place of Sarah's death is Hebron in the land of Canaan. Now that is significant information for the Israelites.
Why? Well, because they're standing on one side of where this is and they're going to have to go in and take, fight to possess where that is.
And it's very interesting. You mean our father Abraham owned that? Now we've got to go in and fight for it? Yeah. Remember God promised it to him and he had to still purchase it. It's telling us something about the way God works and the economy of God in people's lives.
[25:34] It's very interesting to me. Ancient people put great emphasis on living and dying in their family's native land. Now get this, Sarah then is the first person of promise.

That's all hyphenated. Person of promise to die without seeing the fulfillment of God's promises to her. Did you hear what I said? Unbelievers love to seize on stuff like this to prove the Bible's wrong or full of error or things like that.
Here is a woman that God made promises to along with her husband and she's the first person of promise to die without seeing the fulfillment of God's promises to her. What do we do with that? What does that mean? Well, Hebrews chapter 11 is our help because it lists many faithful God-fearers like Noah, Abraham, Moses, and yes, Sarah as believers who died believing and hoping in God's promises but without ever having received those promises themselves.
Now in Sarah's case, God promised her a child and she had Isaac, didn't she? And so God fulfilled that. There were many other promises made to them as a couple and they weren't fulfilled in their lifetime, even in Abraham's lifetime.

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[26:58] So how does Hebrews 11 help us? I'll put it up here on the screens. Look at this. All these, he lists all these believers that lived in faith to God, all these died in faith, faith, without receiving the promises.

The Bible says it right out loud. But, having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on earth.
And all these have gained approval through their faith. And they did not receive what was promised.
So we have all these people that are looking forward, trusting God, that what God says is true.
He will fulfill it in His time and in His way. I am His instrument to be used in whatever way He deems needed, necessary, and purposeful for now. And God will do the rest.
And so they died without receiving them, but they welcomed them by faith. There are many things that you've been promised that you have to hold on to by faith.
[28:12] faith. And that's the difference. So this passage, Genesis 23, listen now, this passage is showing us this strange mixture of both earthly reality and heavenly reality.

And that's where we live. We live in the betwixt and between. We are here and then not yet. And we live right there.
We preach right there. We minister right there. I mean, we're constantly reminded every day of our lives we're not in heaven yet. And yet we're heavenly people. We don't live in bodies that are made for heaven.
And yet I have a soul bound for heaven. So I need to get a new body that will house my soul for eternity because this one won't last for eternity. See, there are all kinds of things that are in betwixt and between.
And so we have to ask, well, then how are we called to live in that? Because sometimes you feel that tension, don't you? I'm not in heaven yet. I feel it too.
[29:21] I'm not immune from all of this. You feel it. At the same time we are living as earthly beings, as strangers and exiles on earth.

Now have you thought about that? You are heavenly people living under the heavenly approval of God and Jesus Christ and yet, like your forebears, you are sojourners here.
You are strangers and exiles. Now I want to ask you, how friendly are you with the world and its system? All of us have to admit there's probably more of the world in me, Jeff, that needs to be in me.
Yep. And I totally understand that. As a human being along with you and a fellow believer striving for holiness, I understand there's too much of the world in me.
And so what do we do about it? What do we do about it? It's why marriages suffer. It's why people sin. It's why relationships get blown apart.
[30:24] You know, we're very quick to point circumstances, situations, the other person. But what this is speaking to is the issue of what is going on in me as a God fearer?

How am I living out my status as a stranger and exile here? This is not my home. There's nothing about my life that is fixed to stay here.
What will remain here will rot and turn into dust. There's something else about me that is fit for heaven in the Lord Jesus Christ.
What am I doing about that? Or am I living my life here like this is all it is? This is all there is. We can say one thing with our mouth and live another, folks.
Obviously, obviously, death is a major theme in this passage. I'm not denying that. But the main point of this chapter is something greater. All right?
[31:26] Here it is. Death is not an obstacle to God's promises to His people. Aren't you glad? Because there's still a whole bunch of promises you have not claimed yet.

They're waiting. And so we need to trust the Lord for those and we need to realize that my death here is not an obstacle to God keeping those promises.
My death here will usher in those promises, the fulfillment. It's wonderful. It's so encouraging. It helps put the seasons of trial and hardship and suffering in this life in perspective.
You could have $650 million like some of these actors and actresses do and be miserable. Going in and out of one marriage after another. Buying all the toys you can buy and be miserable.
That's not the point. No. Death is not an obstacle to God. I'm going to put it up here on the screen. Look at this. On God's side of things is the new spiritual life He gives us to live now.

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[32:33] This is on God's side from His perspective. Alright? Now let me put this up there for you to see this. God upholds His faithfulness to give us everything He's promised us in Jesus Christ.

And while all the treasures of Jesus belong to us now, we will not have them all until heaven. Even though the promises in Christ don't do belong to us and are made sure to us by God's holy promise, not all those promises are fulfilled for us in this earthly life, are they?
Like Abraham, we need to trust God and wait until heaven for those promises to be fulfilled. Jeff, what are you talking about? Give us an example. Okay, here's one.
Jesus said, In my Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. Now here it is. For I go to prepare a place for you. Promise made.
If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself. Promise made. That where I am there you may be also.
[33:41] Promise made. That's where you're headed. That's your house. That's your home. That's your family. That's your future.

Treasure. Now listen to this word, friends. For eternity. It won't end. This is. That won't.
And so what does Jesus tell us? Build your treasure in heaven, not here on earth, where moth and rust and decay, right? Build it in heaven where there is no moth and rust and decay.
Now the question is, are you a God fearer? Are you building your life in heaven here and now? That's what we're commanded to do.
All this other stuff is stuff. Now look, it's important stuff. We have babies. We face death. We have to deal with people. We have to deal with legal matters.
[34:37] We have to go in and out of the seasons of life. Yeah. Marriages get strained. Relations. This is all real. It's real. This isn't the matrix, folks. It's real.

At the same time, there is something greater. There is something that is even more real about you and that is what should define you through these temporary experiences.
You are a child of Almighty God and this is your time to be that child on this earth. And so don't waste it.
Don't waste it. Make it about the Lord Jesus Christ. This is exactly what Abraham is doing. Exactly. That's God's side of things. He promised and he's fulfilling it. Now, what about our side of things? Let's look at that. On our side of things is the life we offer to God on this side of heaven.
[35:37] So what we do is we uphold our faithfulness to God in glorifying him in the fear of the Lord. I was just speaking about that like Abraham, we live by faith in what God has already said.

Here's his promise. Here's his word. Here's his truth. We live by that. We don't have to ask God for more truth. We need to ask God for the wisdom to apply and live the truth he's already given us.
So I don't ask God for stuff like that. I don't say to the Lord in my prayers, you know, speak to me. I say, Lord, you have spoken. Help me understand and live by it. Those are my prayers.
you have spoken. Guide me in what you said. You've chosen to reveal yourself this way. Help me to get in on that. Because sin and self and Satan are clouding the issue and pulling at me.
Lord, help me to see clearly. Help me, Lord. That's why I pray. I need help. God's word of truth is our solid foundation for trusting God to work his word into our hearts so that we can live and follow the truth.
[36:47] Now, one powerful application of God's truth at work in our hearts is the difference in how we understand and mourn death from that of how the world understands and mourns death.

A Christian funeral should look very different in some ways, some significant ways, than that of a funeral for people who are unbelievers or perhaps from a different faith altogether.
You know, a lot of people die in a certain faith and they believe they're going to come back as some kind of animal. And then maybe after that, when that animal dies, they come back as something else.
And it may be a person. I mean, can you imagine that? What if you came back as a fly? Who'd want to be a fly? Not me. I can say that because it's ridiculous.
That is from hell, folks. That is demonic to get people to believe something like that when there's a God in the universe who created all of this for our pleasure and who wants us to enjoy him forever.
[37:53] And then we go to nonsense like that. That's where the human heart goes. This is why you need, here goes the plug, this is why you need to come on Wednesday night and start learning about the hidden idols of our hearts.

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Remember, Satan is a master and yourself, your own self, are masters at camouflaging sin. Masking it so that it looks like something that it's not.
Your idols want to hide and they want to present themselves as something that they're not. What does the scripture say? Satan is an angel of light and he presents himself that way. He doesn't show up with a pitchfork, a bifurcated tail and horns and say, I'm here to ruin your life.
Now remember, this is what we're dealing with in this. This is a battle in God's word. Will we adhere to the truth? Will Abraham adhere to the truth? Will the people of Israel standing there ready to do war adhere to the truth?
Will they look to God and trust him? We understand death. We understand mourning in a different way when we have to face death. Abraham grieved.
[39:00] Now look, Abraham grieved for his dead wife. In fact, the scripture tells us he wept bitterly for her. That's what this means. He missed her with all of his heart.

But now listen to this. That is all true. And I'm glad the scripture doesn't leave it out. But now listen to this part. He did not live in that grief.
That was a season of his life that by the fear of the Lord gave way to a different season. I remember talking to my my widowed mother.
How long has it been, Suzanne? About six years since dad died. He died during COVID and it was very unexpected. It was very hard. They were married for 51 years.
years. And I remember my mom saying to me not long ago, she recently relocated from where she had been living for over a year, relocated and she was FaceTiming showing me her room that had been set up for her in one of our relatives.
[40:05] And they had put pictures of my dad and my mom in the room waiting on her. And so she was giving me, you know, a FaceTime tour. And as she came to those pictures on that shelf, she walked up and the phone hit it and when she saw it, she choked up.

Right? Six years later and she still feels the weight of the loss of her soul mate. Is that wrong? No. The Bible says we grieve.
It doesn't put a time limit on it. We grieve and we mourn. Here's the point. The point is, look what happens next in the text. Abraham grieved for his wife.
Then he gets up and he realizes I've got more life to live. God's not done with me yet. I've got more things to do. And part of it is to honor her. So I need to get busy.
And so he got up and he got busy with life. Not busy in order to just move on and forget about her. Busy in the sense of I want to do what's right in the Lord. That's the key.
[41:13] As we mourn, as we grieve, we move to the next thing because we want to honor God. God. Abraham kept his eyes of faith on God and God's bigger picture of what Sarah obtained by faith.

Isn't that beautiful? Abraham knew, my wife has obtained by faith what God promised to her. She's living in the fulfillment right now. Not me. I'm still here.
But she did. He hoped beyond death because God brought him to see his life that way. Now, let me put this up here on the screen for you.
Life here must give way to death here. Now, that's just true, isn't it? There's going to come a time in your life when that's not going to be true anymore.
Now, here's another thing we need to remember. Death here must give way to life ever after. And that's for everybody. Unbelievers and believers, Christians and non-Christians, we're all going to live forever.
[42:31] It's just where are we going to live it? Where are we going to spend it? And life ever after is the fulfillment of every promise of God to those who fear him. Jesus calls us to live with eternity in mind.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Where treasure is, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Now, we're back to that idol thing again, that heart thing again, the loyalty of your heart.
Abraham turned to do his business with the Hethites, listen now, not because he had simply moved on. That's the way the world talks about this stuff.
You just got to move on. But because God had given him more life to live, he had more purposes of heaven to fulfill and to serve. He had more opportunities to show the goodness of God at work in his life, even in his loss.

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Even as the people of the world see his grief, they realize that grief doesn't define me. Jesus defines me. And so I can grieve and I can be sad and I can feel the weight of the loneliness sometimes, but Jesus is still my Lord.
[43:45] And he still has life for me to live. And so what's next, Lord, that I would honor you? And I have one of my widows saying amen. How long has it been since Bob's death? 14 years, Alonza.

How long were you all married? She was married 40 years. Yeah, well, whenever, whichever one, it was a good bit of time that you knew this man.
I told her we were out together the other morning and we came up talking about her husband, her late husband, and I said, you know, I wish I could have known him and met him. He sounds like my kind of guy.
And she said, oh, he would have loved all of you. All of the men of the church are his kind of men. The Lord knows what he's doing. Abraham is not running from reality.
By doing what he's doing. He is setting the tone and foundation for what will come as Israel possesses what Abraham is purchasing in faith. He's looking ahead and living in the now.
[44:48] So on one hand, Abraham is taking care of the business, his earthly life and the Lord requires. I got to do that. I got to go to work. I got to make a living. I got to, you know, I relate to people. I serve people.

I do this. I do that. I take care of my wife and my kids and pay the bills. We all have that. Yeah. Abraham needs and wants to honor his wife, Sarah, in her death.
So it's right for him to take care of her in her death. Now on the other hand, he's also taking care of the heavenly business of acting in faith to God and his word. How so? Well, both his earthly life and his heavenly life come together to help him express his grief and loss in a faith grounded in a heavenly hope.
He's not grieving without hope, folks. So he gets up off of his grieving bed and he moves to do what needs to be done in the Lord. Abraham honors his neighbors.
You see that next with me? Now this is most of the rest of the chapter, if not all. Abraham, I'm not going to read it all again. We'll take it as we go. Just listen to this. I read this through and you went back and forth with me with my emphases as I read through it.
[45:55] Listen to this. The legal purchase of this land is transacted with great care and it is rehearsed in great detail. You agree? I mean, almost ad nauseam.

It's like we get it. And it's kind of comical when you look into the ancient practices, this whole thing about, no, I give you the land. No, he didn't.
And he never meant to. That's just custom. And it was politeness. And so they started off saying, I know I give it to you with my free heart. Take it and bury your dead.
And then what happened later on? No, no, no. Hear me. No, no, no. Hear me. No, no, no. No, hear me. And when he said, I'll pay full price. What is 400 shekels between friends?
And what did Abraham do next? He wrote the check for 400 shekels. I hear you. 400. Isn't that something? This is all the practice of ancient people and customs.
[46:55] The Israelites would have read this and went, yep, yep. That sounds about right. That's what he's doing. But he's honoring his neighbors in this process. He's following the custom. He's not bucking against it.

See, me, I would have been tempted to walk up and say, look, quit the nonsense. What do you want for the land? Just tell me and it's yours. I got the money. Then they went through this thing. No, Abraham is meekly showing honor to these people. I think it's such a lesson to me. There will be no mistake or misunderstanding that Abraham is going to own this land.
It's going to be done right. Now, we might see this as a sort of down payment that God is making on a piece of land that will one day, get this, one day be the possession of all of Canaan that God had promised him and his descendants forever.
This is a parcel of land, but one day they'll own the whole thing. Abraham's descendants. This is really neat. So Abraham is kind of putting stake in what is his new homeland.
[48:02] This promised land that God has shown him. So there's no going back to his former land. No going back to his former life where his brother and his extended family lives.

No, he is following God in faith. And that's what we do. Folks, we come into a new family. We come into a new spiritual life. And we can't afford to keep looking back. Looking back.

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Now, you're going to have to apply that in a way that's helpful to you. I don't have time to unpack all of that. That's a whole other sermon series. But we need to be careful about looking back. Living in regret.
Living in the woulda, coulda, shoulda. Living with the idea that if I'd only zigged instead of zagged. You know, this is a sovereign God we serve. A sovereign God.
And so Abraham is living in that moment. No more extended family. This is the point. Now, I didn't cover this in my last sermon. This is the point. Look at 22, verse 20 in Genesis.
[49:05] Remember, I stopped at verse 19 and told you I'd pick up in 20 next time. Now, it came about after these things that it was told Abraham saying, Behold, Milcah has also born children to your brother Nahor.

And so it goes through Uz and Buz and Chemuel and all these different people. And then at verse 24, his concubine, whose name was Reuma, also bore Teba and Gahamah and Tehash and Maacah.
What's the point of all these names where he came from, from his brother and his extended family back? The point is this. They're there and Abraham's here and he's putting his roots in Canaan and that's a done deal.
That's a done deal. He's never going back. He has a new mission from God in a new area with a new family and he's living it.
And all of that is in the past. The closest he will come to that is sending a servant out to get Rebecca. And that comes later.
[50:11] That's what he's doing. That's his former homeland. In verses 5 through 7, we get some of the details of this agreement. And again, it follows ancient customs for a business transaction.

And so Abraham uses language and behavior that are respectful of the practices of the people and the culture. And notice he calls himself a stranger and a sojourner.
See, that's what we are as Christians here. But notice he doesn't say a visitor or a passerby. These are important distinctions. Why? Because Abraham knows this is my land.
All you don't know it yet. But in 430 more years, you will. This is all mine. Given to me by Almighty God. I'm just going to purchase a little bit of it right now as I look to the Lord in faith.
But not too long from now, a lot of my people are going to show up. And they're going to take this. Because God gave it to them.
[51:18] It's not an issue of pride. It should humble them. Why them? Especially after all they did to the Lord. The people then refer back.

Notice he refers to himself a stranger and a sojourner. Look, the people refer to Abraham as, did you catch this? My Lord. My Lord. It's a great title of respect that could be, we might use it, sir, in the most elevated terms.
And they know him, he says, as a mighty prince. That literally translates prince of God. God. They know Abraham's life all these years watching him, interacting with him, doing business with him as he moves all of his flocks and herds around.
You are a mighty prince of God. So he has a reputation as a God-fearer among the pagan unbelievers around him. So when he comes to do business with these people, they already know him as a man of integrity.
They know him as a man of his word. They know he is a man who would take a hit before he would hit them in an unfair way. And so they've seen him live for God.
[52:29] So when he goes to transact his business, he's developed a reputation as a God-fearer. And people trust him. They want to do business with him.

Isn't this wonderful? I think it's awesome. In all of this, Abraham's reputation precedes him. Now look in verses 8 through 9. And he spoke with them saying, If it's your wish for me to bury the dead out of my sight, hear me and approach Ephron, the son of Zohar, for me, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns, which is at the end of his field, for the full price.
Let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site. And Ephron was sitting there and he said, no, no, no. You know, he was at the gate of the city. Listen into all this.
Abraham wants a particular burial site, the cave of Machpelah, belonging to one Ephron of Zohar. And Abraham is very, very careful and very wise to conduct his business at the city gate.
That is where all official business is done. There are many officials and there are many witnesses to this interchange. In verse 12, Abraham bows again before the people of the land.

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[53:44] Those who live there witness all of this. They witness his humility, his deferential spirit. They're witnessing the politeness, but they're also witnessing how careful Abraham is being in the transaction itself.

There are many, many people there witnessing this. Now, notice what is again repeated in verse 13. He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land.
If you will only please listen to me, I will give the price of the field, accept it from me that I may buried my dead. What's what is going on here? It says he's I put it up here on the screens.
He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land. They are critical witnesses to this legal interaction taking place between Abraham and Ephron.
All these people are looking at it. You would think this is just a sale of a parcel of land. Don't these people have anything better to do than to sit around the city gate and watch for somebody to do a sale? This is the way it was done in that culture, folks.
[54:48] They wanted to be in on this. Land's a big deal for these people. Big deal. The only thing bigger than the land is family. Then the land. So this is why they're working through this together with such care.

Notice that Abraham insists on paying the full market price of the land. I read in verse 9. The price is set at the measure of 400 shekels of silver. That's not coin.
That's weight. So in today's silver trade, given ancient values, that would equate to about $4,500. Can you imagine what that was like, that kind of money was like back then?
For one parcel of land. What's 400 shekels between friends? What's four grand between friends? I can't imagine. Once again, we take careful notice of the importance of the people of the land being witnesses as this continues to be repeated in the passage.
Pay attention to what the scripture repeats over and over and over again. What? Look, you see this in verse 3, the sons of Heth. You see it in verse 7. You see it in verse 9.
[56:00] In your presence. You see it in verse 10, 11, 12, 13, 16. The people witnessing. The people witnessing. Everyone hearing. Everyone watching.

And then we come to 17 and 18. Look at this. So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced, notice the detail, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field that were within all the confines of its border were deeded over to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth before all who went in and out the gate of the city.
Notice those details. Specific location, all the items that were included in the parcel of land, and at the end of 17, the legal terminology is deeded over or more literally ratified.
This becomes legal now. This has become a documented thing in the legal issues of their day. And then in verse 18, we see the full weight of the transaction resolved in clear terms.
I'm going somewhere with this, folks. Put it up here on the thing. Look. They were deeded over to Abraham for a possession.
[57:19] You see that in the last part of the slide? In the presence of the sons of Heth before all who went in and at the gate of his city. What are we talking about here?

On this slide, if you can see it, you have some red written in the middle here. Right here? All right. That's where Mechpelah, it's pointing.
Here's Hebron. And so right next to that is where. Now look at where that is in association with the land of Canaan. It's right in the heart of it all.
That's significant. And this, my friends, is currently known as the cave of the patriarchs.
That's what we call it today. This is the cave at Machpelah. This is the very region and they think they have nailed down the specific cave and so they built this compound around it.
[58:23] So what you see in the center there with the walled part and the turrets and all, inside of that is the cave of the patriarchs that Abraham purchased.

And that's why they built it. And it's very, very interesting. Why all this emphasis on witnesses in the city paying the full market commercial price on all the legal details of what was included in the sale? Well, I want to tell you that at the time it was very important because Abraham was staking a claim in the promised land. And that would be carried over with his descendants who would eventually invade the land.
But because God is sovereign and God is God, God knew down the road into modern times this would also be an issue. And sure enough, it is.

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This is Artifacts Magazine. This is an archaeological magazine that I get so that I can do what I'm about to do with you now as it bears on sermons and my understanding of Scripture and that kind of thing.
[59:29] And so listen to this. There is a particular Israeli member of their Congress, as it were, the Knesset. And he introduced a bill not long ago to remove the cave of the patriarchs in Hebron from ownership by the Muslim Waqif and place it under the control of Israelis.

The bill cites, quote, Abraham's biblical purchase of the land as proof of Jewish ownership and suggests that local Jewish municipalities be granted authority over the site.
He's also reported as to have written this, quote, It is unacceptable that in the Jewish state, the cave of the patriarchs, which was purchased by our father Abraham and preserved by the Jewish people for thousands of years, should be owned by the Waqif.
However, as this reviewed article also notes, in 2017, UNESCO ruled that the cave of the patriarchs belonged to the state of Palestine.
In July of this year, the Israeli government granted the local kirat, this is some religious council, partial authority over the cave of the patriarchs to carry out renovations and construction work at the site.
[60:49] The planned construction work is to include an advanced fire safety system in that big expanse, new security measures, and permanent roofing over unroofed sections, which were mainly located in the Jewish section.

Of course, the United Arab Emirates has condemned this Israeli approval construction and has called it a grave violation of the historical and legal status quo at the mosque.
Is this an issue today? It sure is. And why is the Scripture giving us this kind of detail? Because this was a legal transaction at the full market price and it belongs to Abraham and the Israeli people.
I'm not making political comments. I'm reading you straight out of Scripture what the Bible says. In January, Israel's civil administration confirmed that it would take over the renovations and installation of the courtyard roof after the Hebron municipality refused to advance the project.
The administration said that the existing status quo of the tomb and prayer arrangements would remain unchanged, but that Israel would take control. Still going on today.
[61:59] Still going on today. Verses 19 and 20 give us the final word on who owns the land in the sight of God Almighty. God was with them. God was working in their lives and it was the Lord that gave this to his people.

After this, Abraham buried Sarah, his wife, in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan. All of that is to say he's driven a stake in the ground.
This is his home. So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth. End of story. Finally, I'll give you this one and I'll give it to you quickly.
Abraham honors his God. It's the entire passage. It's everything I've been talking. This is a transaction to purchase land and it's a statement of Abraham's faith to literally plant his life and his own death.
He'll be buried in this cave as will his kids be buried in this cave. Abraham is saying, yes, God Almighty, I am your servant.
[63:04] From the moment you made me your son, I am your servant. So I'll put it up here. God formed and forged Abraham into a humble, teachable, influential man.

We can best understand Abraham's actions as that of a man owned by God. Are you owned by God and do you live like it? Is God's stamp all over you?
Is the way you do your business following Abraham's honor? Do you follow his example? Is the way you're married to your husband, to your wife, does it honor God for you to be married the way you are?
The way you raise your kids? Abraham's actions honored his wife. They honored those that he lived among. But most of all, they honored the God who loves him and gave him life.
He became a man of deep integrity. He was a God fearer. He wouldn't let compromise in any way bring him away. Fear? Nope. Laziness?
[64:14] Nope. Lust? Greed? Pride? Worldliness? Nope. He fought them all. God fearers. This is how I'll end. God fearers know who it is who owns them.

And God fearers persevere in their privilege to live out earthly matters in God honoring ways. Let's pray together. Well, Father God in heaven, you are the Lord of creation.

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You have given us the details of scripture and they matter. And we thank you, God, for your carefulness to give us a word that is every word true. And so we take your word as truth and we ask you to help us apply it to our lives in ways that help us to live holy lives, God honoring lives, Father. We are assailed at every turn, Lord. Even common things that we face every day that are just part of life just serve so often to pull at us and drag us.
And so we ask you to help us to fight the good fight with joy in our heart. Help us to remember that we have a heavenly home. We have a place that we are called to that is fixed in your own mind, promised by your own heart, held firm and secure in your own hand so that nothing in the universe can ever take us away from you.
[65:45] We love you, Father, not like we should. And oftentimes we don't show it. We ask for your forgiveness, Father, and ask that you would use messages like this to encourage and equip us for godly living through this week.

Help us to be people of honor, living in honorable ways to bring honor upon our God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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