The God Who Cares

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Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0:00] Father God, we thank You that we have You to praise! for the reality of this church family.! We're seven and a half years old together!

We praise the Holy Spirit who leads us in righteousness, in faithfulness, in love, in kindness as we take on more and more of the character of Jesus as we are conformed to His image because the truth is working in our hearts.
Thank You for changing our hearts. Thank You for working in our church family and leading us to one another that we would bear one another's burdens and love one another and walk with each other as we face the issues of sin and self and Satan.
Help us to continue to be faithful, to love one another with great love, the love of Jesus. Help us to show that love to You by keeping Your commandments. And Father, again, I thank You most humbly not only for sparing my life but for giving me the strength in body and spirit to be in this pulpit and continue to minister to Your people, to feed them the Word, to join with my partner Greg and continue to shepherd.
It's been a wonderful lesson for me of the great honor that it is to be able to preach the Word of God and exalt Jesus in the preaching of that Word.
[1:44] We thank You now for our time together and we pray that You'll open our minds, our hearts, to this wonderful truth that sets us free and that truth is Jesus Himself crucified, buried, and raised again.

May we exalt Him in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you, dear friends. Well, so in January, I was in Genesis 18.
And little did I know that that would be my last sermon for months and that I would end up going through all that we've gone through. But let's go back into Genesis 18 and what I've decided to do today.
By the way, thank you, Micah, for playing for us today. For those of you who don't know, those recordings were Micah playing when he was here as part of our church and helping us lead out in worship.
And he was kind enough to record a bunch of that for us so that we can go. We're still praying him back here. I don't know if he knows that, but selfishly, we're praying his family back here, especially now that he's got a grandbaby, right?
[2:48] Can I get an amen? Amen. Right, right. You know how it is. After you have a child and you have grandparents, they blow right by you to get to the baby, right?

Is that the way it is? Okay. Yes. We love you, but kind of thing. All right. So we're in Genesis 18. And what I've decided to do is I got about halfway through Genesis 18.
Instead of telling you to go back and listen to those messages, I'm just going to start again. Here in this chapter, I've tweaked it some. There's some things I want to reemphasize for you.
So Genesis 18. And as we get ready to delve into this passage, let me just share the title of what I had titled this last time, The God Who Cares.
This is a passage about the God Who Cares. And as I get you ready to read this with me and think about it, I want to ask you this question.
[3:48] And I'm serious about this now. So I want to engage you and bring you in on this as we think about it together. In what ways, plural ways, did God show His care to you this past week?

Now, just think about that. You don't have to answer out loud. But if you were to sit here right now and make a list in your heart of the ways that God demonstrated, showed, manifested His care for you this past week, I wonder what your list would look like.

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I wonder what your top three would be. Could you pencil them in almost automatically? Now, one of the reasons I'm asking you that is, do you understand that what we're doing in this worship service this morning has everything to do with that question?
You should be worshiping out of gratitude. I should be preaching and worshiping with you out of gratitude. For what? For God's providential care.
For God's goodness shown to us in Jesus Christ in many, many tangible ways. We're wearing clothes. We had automobiles that brought us here. I mean, we can get right down to the practical things of life.
[5:02] You ate food this past week. You were able to be safe and well-protected in your homes all week. Now, those are just some tangible material blessings we enjoy.

We didn't even list any spiritual blessings that we have in the Lord. Like, every single moment of every single day of your life this past week, God was forgiving you in Christ Jesus.
Conforming you to the image of His Son. Safeguarding your spirit for your eternal home. In all these ways, God is showing Himself good to us.
You and I need to remember something very, very important about our God as we worship Him each day. As we bow in obedience to Him every single day. And it's this.
He cares. God cares. He cares for what He's made. He cares for you. The God of the universe has made His caring personal to you.
[6:04] He hasn't forgotten you. He hasn't overlooked you. He's not too busy to condescend to minister to you in the power of His Spirit each and every moment of each and every day.

Now, that in itself is nothing short of a miracle of God's grace. That God lives in you by a miracle and ministers to you by that same miracle. I want to say to you this in very emphatic terms.
The world does not care about you. The world is about selling you something. The world is about manipulating you. The world is about constantly getting something from you.
Also, your own flesh truly does not care about you. You may think it does. You may think the desires and cravings and everything else that we deal with are something that's...
No. Your flesh doesn't care about you. And then finally, the devil certainly does not care about you.
So the world, the flesh, and the devil are enemies of our spiritual life and in our walk with the Lord.
[7:11] Is that not true? That's what the Bible tells us. But God, the Bible tells us. But God. God cares. He cares.

The Apostle Peter tells us to humble ourselves before the Lord under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time casting all your anxiety on Him.
Why? Why do all those things? Why is all of that part of our worship? Because He cares for you.
Now, please don't hasten past that. God cares for you.
It's personal. It is individual. It is individual. We're here together today as individuals worshiping as a corporate body. We are a room full of individuals who are coming together as one voice, one heart, one mind in our worship to the Lord.
Isn't that wonderful? You know, we can only imagine what it's going to be like to hear the chorus of praise that's going to happen in heaven when we all gather together to sing to God.
[8:19] Just how beautiful that's going to be. That we'll be all put in one voice in harmony with one another in the Lord. Now, we're practicing that here this morning, aren't we?

We're practicing. But it matters to God. It's not like a practice that doesn't count and then the gain comes later. This matters to God. You matter to the Lord.
Now, that's what I want you to hang on to. We're going to see that in the way that God condescends to Abraham and particularly to Sarah in our passage this morning.
So, in Genesis 18, verse 1 begins, Now the Lord, that is Yahweh, appeared to him, that is Abraham, by the oaks of Mamre, while Abraham was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.
When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him. And when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth.
[9:26] Then Abraham said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by. Please, let a little water be brought in.

Wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a piece of bread that you may refresh yourselves. And after that, you may go on since you have visited your servant.
And they said, So do as you have said. So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour and knead it and make bread cakes.

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Abraham also ran to the herd and took a tender and choice calf. He gave it to the servant and he hurried to prepare it. He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared and placed it before them and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.
Then they said to Abraham, Where is Sarah, your wife? And Abraham replied, There in the tent. And then he said, I will surely return to you at this time next year and behold, Sarah, your wife, will have a son.
[10:36] And Sarah was listening at the tent door which was behind it. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age.

Sarah was past childbearing. Sarah laughed within herself or to herself. So she laughed quietly, not out loud, saying, After I have become old, shall I have pleasure?
My Lord being old also? And the Lord said to Abraham, Now remember, Abraham didn't hear that. He didn't hear her laugh. And the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I indeed bear a child when I am so old?
Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time, I will return to you at this time next year and Sarah will have a son.
Well, Sarah denied it, however, saying, I did not laugh for she was afraid. And then he, capital H, he said, No, but you did laugh. All right, we'll stop there.
[11:43] We'll stop there and we'll see what's going on. Now, one of the things we want to point out right away is that this is a Christophany, I think. I think this is a manifestation of the pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We call that a Christophany. Christophany comes from two Greek words, Christos, which means Christ, and then phino. Phino means to appear, to become visible or to make known.
So Jesus is God and has always existed. And here, Jesus is appearing in the Old Testament before His physical birth to Mary. Once again, folks, if your mind struggles to get around that, join the club. But don't forget what it is saying here in verse 14. Is anything too difficult for the Lord? No. And so we don't have to struggle at all with this being a fact.
We might struggle with how in the world, but we would struggle with that when we look at Moses standing at the sea and doing this and then the sea parting and the children going and going.
[12:50] You stand there all day trying to figure out how that happened and all you come up with is this because the Lord demanded that it happen. Nothing is impossible with the Lord. So Christ here is coming to remind these two people of His love and presence with them so that He will fulfill all that He's promised.

Please hang on to the understanding that this passage is about God keeping His promise. God made a promise years and years before. He is now appearing to them after years have gone by and He is reassuring them I will fulfill my promise in what I've told you.
God is not capricious and God is not someone to go back on what He said. I will fulfill it. So God knows you and God actively cares for you because God in Christ has promised to do that for you. God would have to go against His own Son not to take care of you as His child. Jesus lives in you. And so God must take care of you.
I can say it this way and I'm perfectly on biblical grounds to do it. God has obligated Himself to take care of you in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.
[14:08] It's not a burden for God. It's not something that God is doing and saying I wish I hadn't promised that one. If I could take that back I would. I know it's silly.

You're laughing because it's silly. But boy we live like that sometimes. Sometimes we get into these trials and we live like God made a promise that now He's not keeping. Why?
Yeah. Yeah. The Lord is faithful to keep His promises. So here's how we want to tackle this. We're going to talk about the ways in this passage in these first 15 verses that God is demonstrating this promise keeping caring.
You can think of that way. A promise keeping God making good on His promise by demonstrating His caring for these people in some very, very unique and special ways.
Ways that carry over in the way that He takes care of us in the Lord Jesus Christ. So the first thing that I want to do in the way of this outline is talk about God's friendship to Abraham and to Sarah.
[15:14] His friendship. We'll see that as we take it apart in the first eight verses. Before we do that, hold your finger there and go back to the back of the Bible, to the book of James. I want you to see this yourself.

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You fly by the book of Hebrews and right sandwiched between Hebrews and 1 Peter, you come to the little book of James.
And in chapter 2 verse 23, this New Testament saint speaks of Abraham in very specific ways. We'll pick it up in verse 23.
And the scripture was fulfilled which says, and Abraham believed God. Now you see that? That's faith. That's saving faith. Abraham is saved in the same way you and I are saved.
It's by believing faith. Saving faith. And God reckoned, God credited to him righteousness. That is righteousness in Christ. And then notice how it ends.
[16:13] And Abraham was called what? The friend of God. The friend of God. So this is about friendship. And it's a beautiful way that the scripture talks about God coming down to demonstrate friendship to Abraham and Sarah.

I want you to think as we go through this passage together, this is the big, big, big God of the universe. The God that we read weeks and weeks and weeks ago about who created the universe and created everything that we know of in six days.
He did that. He could have done it in six seconds, but he did it in six days. This same God now is visiting Abraham and Sarah to talk to them in human form, face to face, person to person, and heart to heart.
Please let that settle on you. Now what we're going to talk about in terms of what God is doing here, and this is a doctrine that is very precious to us, it's the condescension of God.
You see that? Condescension. It means to stoop or descend. Now the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre.
[17:21] That's how we're seeing this happen in verse one. Now the Lord, this word Lord is Yahweh. Yahweh. This is the name that God gave to Moses and said, this is what you call me.

He appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre. He just appeared. I'm going to talk about more of that in just a moment. What we're talking about here with the oaks of Mamre is a place that is characterized by worship.
This is a place of worship in Abraham's life. Now if you studied this, you could just read this and go right over it. But if you paused enough to study this and say, let me look up this oaks of Mamre thing.
We've talked about this in the past. This is the first place that Abraham built an altar to the Lord as he traveled into what would become the promised land. So the oaks of Mamre always characterizes a place of worship.
And that's why we're being told that this is what's happening at this particular place. It shouldn't be wasted on us that Abraham's life is characterized by drawing near to God.
[18:34] And now God is drawing near Abraham. Abraham, unique to his neighborhood as it were, surrounded by all these pagans.

Abraham is unique in that he has a true relationship with the God of the universe and his life looks like that. Abraham doesn't live or worship like a lot of the other people around him because he has God as his God.
And God is making a difference in his life and now God has come to meet with him. God again as I mentioned a minute ago the condescension of the Lord up here on the screen simply refers to God coming down or stooping and descending to make himself known to us, to be with us, to live with us by grace through faith for us as New Testament believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.
I believe this is the Lord Jesus Christ in human form standing before Abraham now. Now all of this is rooted in the name which God used of himself.
Go back to chapter 17 if you would and look at what he says in verse 1. He says about midway through the verse, I am God Almighty.
[19:47] I am God Almighty. This is El Shaddai and Shaddai means the Almighty.

One of the things that I want us to realize as God condescends to us is that whenever God comes down he is not diminished as God.
So think about Jesus fully God and fully human and he comes down to be in human form. He is not diminished as God at all.
He is still fully God. Now that's very important. You think of this little infant that's just come out of his mother's womb and he's helpless and yet he's fully God.

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You think about Jesus telling the people that if I wanted to I could call down legions of angels right now to wipe you guys off the face of the planet. I'm God I can do whatever.
[20:48] You think of Jesus commanding the storm commanding the waves making arms that are shriveled up and deformed by birth grow back in front of people into a functioning arm.

This is the God of the universe. God is not diminished as he condescends to us as human beings. He doesn't lose his godness by coming down to be with us or even to live in us.
Alright? Quiz! I'm taking a cue from my brother Greg. He loves pop quizzes. Pop quiz church. How much of the Holy Spirit did you get at the moment of your salvation?
What proportion, what percentage of the Holy Spirit did you get when you were saved in the moment that you were born again? What percentage? A hundred percent?
Alright, how many think a hundred percent? Raise your hand because that's the right answer. Yes, church, absolutely. Now, look, this is important and we'll deal with this in a little while too.
[21:55] It's very important for us to understand this because we are not commissioned by God in Scripture as worshipers to pray God down to us. We don't have to pray the Holy Spirit down.

Greg and I don't have to stand up here, Ben doesn't have to come up here, and work you guys up into a frenzy with smoke and mirrors so that we can convince the Holy Spirit that we're serious about worship and you need to now come down and rest on this place.
You walked in with the Holy Spirit. What we're trying to do is put ourselves in the position of bowing down to this God who lives in us and who deserves our worship because He is a God of grace and a God of mercy.
And so we are reverent. We are sober-minded. We approach the worship of God as we should.
Now, in Hebrew thought, there are two treasure troves of meaning in this name of God, this El Shaddai, this God Almighty, which aren't immediately apparent to us, but when we uncover, when we unpack this, they're very precious jewels of encouragement, just like they were to Abraham in his time.
Now, one meaning of El Shaddai, as you see it up here, is power or omnipotence. Power, I am God Almighty. That's why He said it.
[23:16] Is anything too difficult for the Lord? The answer is no. We see this put forward in chapter 18, verse 14. I pointed that out to you. So, God can and does overcome, hear this now, this is important for Sarah, God does overcome barrenness.

He does and He will. He overcomes storms and drought and famine and disease and blindness and sin, etc., etc. God is not intimidated by that at all.
Now, listen, God overcomes what overcomes us because He cares for us. Jesus overcomes what overcomes us.
This is the meaning of the cross. On the cross, Jesus overcame what had overcome us and He conquered sin and death on our behalf. Is that not true? Amen.
And this is what we worship God for. We worship this wonderful God who's given us life in the name of His Son. In fact, let me tell you this now, a second meaning, a second meaning of El Shaddai, God Almighty, is that God overcomes all things both physical and spiritual to care for His children.
[24:29] There is nothing that can stand in the way of God in His caring for you. Now, you guys know, and I'm not going to harp on this, you guys know, when they went in to do the discectomy on me thinking I just had a herniated disc, they found a bunch of infection.

And if left untreated, the doctor told me that infection would have eaten away my lower spine. That's how quickly it was working in my body. Left untreated at that point, it would have killed me.
And so they got in motion very, very, very quickly. Listen, if God wanted me in heaven, then that would have took me out. Right? But apparently God wanted me to keep preaching and ministering among you, at least for now.
And so that was not powerful enough to overcome the grace of God working in my life. I am thankful that God used great doctors and I had great care, you guys.
Great nurses, great staff, people to come out to my home and teach my wife how to infuse all that IV stuff in me to help me get past it. But you know who I thank most for all that?
[25:35] The Lord. The Lord. Because it was obviously God's will to spare my life. Folks, whatever it is that you're facing, there is nothing in this world that Satan or the world itself or the flesh or the devil can throw at you that God cannot overcome in your life.

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God is the one that dictates and purposes the plans that He has for you in your life and how you will step out your life in those purposes. Suzanne and I were talking together the other day over the last, Suzanne, what's it been, a month that we've gotten all the news of the deaths?
Has it been within the about a month? So what was it? Five? Five people from contemporary with us that we knew and were part of their lives when I first became a Christian at Suzanne's home church.
Within the last 30 days, five people in that group have passed and gone to be with the Lord. One of them, a fellow preacher. One of the first, if not the first sermons I ever preached in my life, I preached with this man who passed away this past month who also went to become a preacher. He and I surrendered to preach and go into ministry at the same time. And he went to be with the Lord. It was very interesting, he developed sepsis and it killed him.
[26:59] This is what Suzanne had a few months ago when she went septic. And again, the Lord could have taken her but God spared her life. Folks, this is all in God's timing and purpose.

You live day by day and step by step in terms of what God has for you. And so you need to trust the Lord and step it out with him. And this is the whole point of what God's bringing to the life of Abraham as well.
God provides for us despite what tries to stand between us and him. The distance that God has between himself and us in terms of the physical universe.
We think we're here on earth, where is God? Where we take these big telescopes and we look and we can't see him. We look way out. Then we shoot rockets up with big cameras and stuff to look even further.
We'll send the ship as far as the telescope can see where it ends. We'll send the ship and put it there and then we'll be able to see all and we look and we can't see him.
[28:04] But the distance between God in the universe and us here is nothing to God because he lives in us and he ministers to us every now.

Think about it. Come on. That should make us go hallelujah. These are truths that make our souls soar in the Lord if we'll just give ourselves half a minute to think about it.
And I want you to have half a minute to think about it. Caring for us as his children also means though that God corrects us and he corrects us to keep us in close fellowship.
I'm going to do a little more with this in a minute but if you look at 9 through 15 you get this idea of God confronting and correcting especially with verse 13 and verse 15.
God's going to confront and he's going to correct. He's not just going to let Sarah sit back in the tent and think what she wants to think and say what she wants to say that are not true. He loves her too much to do that.
[29:07] Why does God do this? That's the question I want to put up here. Why does God do this confronting and correcting in our lives? As you'll see the answer is this so that we might bear greater spiritual fruit in our faith relationship with him.

That's why. It comes down to honoring and glorifying the Lord. Now we're blessed with the same benefits of God's goodness toward us and our covenant with Christ even as Abraham is experiencing here.
God condescends to us. He cares for us. He corrects us in the Lord Jesus Christ. God comes to you to love you and to live in you in Christ.
God is your master and your friend. So you don't go through a trial and decide in that in those moments or weeks or months or whatever it is of your trial that now all of a sudden God is harsh. God has forgotten about me. God is not being fair to me. You know while everything's cooking along he's your friend right? And now all of a sudden you're in a trial and there's lots you don't understand and so now God is more distant to you.
[30:21] We're tempted to live like that. I totally get that. And we have to fight it. And you fight it with faith. You fight it based on the promises God's made to you.

How's Abraham and Sarah going to fight it? Sarah needs to remember. Remember Sarah a decade ago God made a promise to you. It doesn't matter how much time has gone by.
God doesn't go back on his promises. Now he's showing up again and he's telling her hey I'm going to come to you next year and you're going to have a baby. And Sarah's in the tent.
And she's laughing inside of herself about it. This is not a woman who's basing her relationship with the Lord on what God has said and promised. Right now she's by sight.

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I'll do more with that in just a minute. But this is our challenge as we walk with the Lord. Friendship. God is a God of friendship to us in the Lord.
[31:19] Now the second way that we see God's friendship demonstrated in this particular way in this passage is I want to this is what I'm going to call it because I think it captures it congeniality.

I know we don't throw that word around a lot. Congeniality. It just simply means a warm, intimate, agreeable, favorable kind of relationship. God is congenial to us.
He's warm. He's tender. He's agreeable. He's favor. He has favored us in his son. Here's how Matthew Henry described this. The appearance of God to Abraham seems to have had in it more of freedom and familiarity and less of grandeur and majesty.
And I think you know that's true. I want you to think with me for just a moment how chapter 18 describes this. Look at with me again. Now the Lord appeared. Isn't that interesting?
It doesn't say the Lord walked up. It says the Lord appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre. And notice what happens. While Abraham was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day, he lifted up his eyes and looked and behold, three men were standing opposite him.
[32:31] Now do you get the flavor of what just happened? The guy's sitting in his tent and he's doing his thing and he's probably been looking out, you know, at the horizon and everything going on out there.

And in the next moment he looks up and there's three guys standing there. Where did you come from? He immediately recognizes who he's talking to, to one of them.
He immediately recognizes. Why? Because he's met with him before. This God has talked to him before, made promises to him personally before.
Abraham is familiar with this God. The God of the universe appears to him as a man. God's love and humility are on display for us to take comfort in as he comforts Abraham.
In other words, folks, the Lord finds us where we are. He meets us where we are. He ministers to us for who we are. So this visit from the Lord is the sharing of fellowship and the covenant love of God.
[33:32] I'll put this up here on the screen. Friendship and fellowship, they are both marks of this meal that's described in the passage as the Lord honors Abraham.

The Lord honors Abraham by sitting at his table. And then Abraham honors the Lord by standing at a respectable distance and watching in anticipation as God's servant.
So the meal, hear me now, the meal that we're seeing described in the passage is God's way of reassuring Abraham of his love and his desire for fellowship with Abraham.
God, I has come to meet him. I want to fellowship with you. I accept your offer to have a meal with you. I'll do for you all that I've promised. So this is an amazing encounter with the Lord.
Moses and the elders of Israel had a similar encounter as God gave them special reassurance. And I want to show you the parallel of it because what he's doing with Abraham right now, he's going to do with his chosen people, Israel.
[34:35] And what he's done with his chosen people, Israel, now we're going to come over here in New Testament times and we're going to see that he's doing the very same thing with us. He's drawing near to us and closeness to us.

Let's look at it real quickly. It's Exodus 24. Exodus 24. So hold your finger in Genesis 18.
I'm trying to help you dig down a little bit. I know that. Keep your thinking caps on with me. We'll begin in Exodus 24, verse 3.
And remember what we're doing is we're seeing how God is doing a similar thing in terms of this meal being a fellowship meal with his servant, Abraham.
Verse 3. Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances and all the people answered with one voice. And here's what they said in response to God's word.
[35:33] All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do. Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. Then he arose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.

He sent young men of the sons of Israel and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood, put it in basins, the other half of the blood.
He sprinkled them. This is all just describing how they are worshiping the Lord and following and obedience on the word. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it.

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He read it in the hearing of the people and they said all that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will be obedient. Isn't that? That's something so beautiful.
So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people and said behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words. And we celebrate the blood of the covenant don't we?
[36:37] Don't we do that? Because the blood's been sprinkled on us. Whose blood? Jesus' blood. Verse 9. Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and 70 of the elders of Israel.

So here you have the leaders of Israel. And they saw, this is no small thing folks, they saw the God of Israel and under his feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire as clear as the sky itself. Yet he, he, capital H, did not stretch out his hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel. Because usually you see God, you die. And they saw God and they did what?
Ate and drank. This is a fellowship meal. This is a meal of reassurance and friendship and fellowship in the Lord. That's what's happening here.
In fact, we have a commentator that talked about this as a peace offering that symbolized this friendship. I want to share what he said with you. Where is it?
[37:42] A meal to be eaten by the congregation in the sanctuary as a celebration of the Lord's provision for them in his blessings. It was a meal that brought people together who shared one thing, peace, peace with God.

Peace with God. Now, folks, as you read that up on the screen, because Leviticus 3, 7, 11 through 21, that's also a depiction of what I just read for you in Exodus.
I'm just not going to go to Leviticus. As you read that up there from that commentator, does that sound familiar to you in terms of how we worship? worship? What time of the worship for us do we do something very similar?
Where we eat and partake of a fellowship meal, as it were, to honor the Lord Jesus Christ? When do we do that? What do we call that? Communion? The Lord's table?
You see what I'm saying? How that's carried over? In that meal, we are celebrating and memorializing the friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for us.
[38:50] Because what did Jesus say? What did He say about friendship and laying down your life? There is no greater friend than someone who would give His life for you. Right?

And that's exactly what we're celebrating. Do you see how the Bible threads this all the way through and it's consistent? People who are worshiping God in the Old Testament, they're worshiping in a very similar way that we're called to worship.
Why? Because they're saved in the same way we are and they're worshiping the same God we are. So that shouldn't surprise us. We don't have the Jewish ritual hanging over us anymore because all that was fulfilled in whom?
Christ. Are you connecting these things now? And we're understanding how this works. We're in a better position to understand what our worship is. So we have condescension and we have congeniality as God ministers to us.
And we see this in the friendship that he has with Abraham. Now in response, look on the screen, in response, we're to show our friendship to God also.
[39:56] Abraham offers us a really, really wonderful example of how a servant of the Lord responds in friendship with God. These are responses of our worshiping hearts.

Now one of the reasons I want to put that up there and emphasize that is this. Remember, remember, every time you worship in all the ways that you worship, as you're driving down the road praying, as you come here to worship in a more formal way, as you're doing devotions in your home with your family and praying with your kids or your wife or your husband, whatever the worship involves as you're worshiping the Lord, listen now, it is always, always a response to God.
Because God is initiating His grace in your life and drawing you to Himself, your worship should always be a response to God. You are responding to Him out of a heart of gratitude, humility, obedience.
In other words, your worship is always tied to what God has laid down as His truth about His person, His character, and His ways. Your worship is always grounded in who God is and how He operates.
Always, that has to be those twin pillars have to be part of who we are in our worship. I am responding to God in terms of who He's revealed Himself to me to be in Scripture and most often in

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His Son, most powerfully in His Son.
[41:31] So I'm responding to who He is in His character. And then my worship should also take on a response in terms of God's ways. How God has revealed Himself to work in the lives of His people.

That's what we're seeing in Abraham. That's why I'm doing what I'm doing with you this morning. We're looking into the life of Abraham. We're taking a snapshot in his life and we're talking about how God worked in his life and how Abraham is responding to Him in terms of who God is, who Abraham knows Him to be, and how He works in Abraham's life.
Can you hang on to that? I'm worshiping God and responding to God based on who He is as He's revealed Himself to me and based on how He's shown me He operates in His world.
I can learn from people who've worshipped Him in the past and how He's dealt with them. How He's dealt with them in trials, tribulations, tough times.
How He's dealt with them when He's blessed them and they're overflowing with His goodness. That they didn't forget God and get haughty and pumped up about it. Or if they did, what happened to them and what their repentance looked like.
[42:38] I think of David in that. Being made king and then taking advantage of a woman and doing terrible things because he got too prideful. Alright?

These are all responses of our worshiping hearts. And the first way that we can characterize it, the first way, is humility. We see Abraham as a humble servant.
Let me go back and read some of this with you again. I want you to notice it. In verse 3, he says, My Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, don't pass your servant by.
Abraham is speaking in those terms. Now, the word that Scripture employs here suggests that Abraham knew it was the Lord. Why is that? Well, it is the word Adonai.
Adonai. When he says, my Lord. My Lord is Adonai. Alright? What does that mean? I'm going to put it up here on the screen so you can see me walk through this.
[43:37] Oh, Lord. It comes from a particular root. And that root word is Adon. It means superior, master, or owner.

Now, Scripture uses the root word Adon to refer to man primarily. At times to God, but mostly it refers to man.
So we have a word being used here where its root that it comes from is primarily used to refer to man. Now, switch it over and let's better understand how this particular word that is being used by Abraham is used throughout Scripture.
Look. Next one. Adonai, the word used here, is an intensified emphatic plural from the word Adon and the Old Testament uses this form of Adonai more than 300 times in the Scriptures.
And what? It always refers to God. I don't want you to be in any doubt that Abraham is talking to God here.
[44:41] And he knows it. If you look over at verse 25 of chapter 18, notice right at the bottom of the verse, shall not the judge of all the earth deal justly and that judge is capitalized.

He knows exactly who he's talking to. This is the God of the universe. Now, I think this word demonstrates Abraham's closeness and familiarity with God.
He is the God Almighty. Yes, he is El Shaddai. He is also Adonai. So it underscores an element of covenant friendship. Now, what effect is this friendship to have on us?
Okay, and here it is. It brings us close to God. It makes us all the more eager to do all we can in service to God as we think about his friendship.
Sometimes, particularly in tough times, we can get this weird idea of who God is and see him as distant and he's punishing me. And all these kinds.
[45:43] Listen, God does not punish believers. Why not? Pop quiz. Oh, this is the second one, Greg. I like have a record. Why doesn't God punish believers?

Because Jesus did what? He suffered. He took our punishment for us. So we're no longer under condemnation. Romans 8, 1.
There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Now, believers are disciplined by the Lord. Now, you don't get a free pass. You can't go out and live like hell, like the devil.
If you begin to sin and you get a little bit prideful and hard-hearted about that, God's going to spank you. And let me tell you, that's not pleasant.

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But he does that because he loves you. But he doesn't punish us. He doesn't pound you. That's not who the Lord is as he deals with his kids any more than you do that with your children, I hope.
[46:46] So this intimacy that we share with him, it helps us recognize God's presence and it helps us to understand his work in our life and in the life of others.

And that's what we look for. As we relate to each other, as we even relate to people outside of our church who are believers, we're looking for the way God is working in their life. We can even see this in unbelievers, something they won't recognize.
If you've ever had a conversation with an unbeliever who might have come to you and they know you're spiritual and so they're feeling something that they might think is kind of weird and spiritual and they're trying to figure it out and they come and sit down with you and they ask you, help me understand what's going on with me, what's happening in me.
The work of God drawing them to himself can be a very confusing thing for unbelievers, right? They don't have the spirit in them to help them discern that.
So they need help. But you're looking for the work of God in people's lives. You're listening for the work of God in people's lives. Even unpleasant people, they may just be a step away from God just breaking them.
[47:57] And all the anger and the meanness that you see in them, it could be that they're right at the cusp of God breaking them and this is their last throw. This is their last great cowardly act of trying to resist.

And they're just a moment away from crumbling before the grace of Almighty God in the Lord Jesus. You don't know. You can't see that in their heart. So don't give up.
Pray and be available. And that's all. That didn't cost you anything, okay? Alright. This brings us close to God and it makes us more eager to serve Him and to be in His ways.
I think it does anyway. So now I want you to notice it's the heat of the day. But now listen, there's nothing in this, in the passage, there's nothing too much for, listen, this 99-year-old man.
He's 99 years old. And 99 was 99, folks. But look, look what it says in the passage. He runs to meet His guests.
[49:05] He hurried into the tent to get Sarah busy with preparations. He ran to the herd. And He Himself chose the calf.

And He hurried to prepare it with His own hands. This is worship. Wouldn't you have loved to have been those three men sitting there watching this?
Heep. Heep. Boy, he's quite the busy man, isn't he? He's all over the place. He's inculcating this into the people around him.
His wife is being exposed to this sense of hurriedness in his life. Listen, don't see this as some kind of anxious way of hurrying around and losing his mind.
We would call it freaking out. He's not freaking out. This is worship. Listen to me. This is a sense of urgency. Why urgent? Because He's serving the God of the universe.
[50:06] And it makes Him have a sense. As I get older, and stuff happens to me, and things are happening to me, that sense of urgency to preach the gospel increases in my life.

Because I realize, especially after this last one, Jeff Jackson, you could be gone tomorrow. And somebody else will be filling this pulpit. So I told you, every time I preach, I preach like this is the last time I get to do it.
This may be the last word I have for you. And you wake up Tuesday morning and find out Jeff is in heaven, and you're looking for a new guy to come do this. I understand that.
This is a sense of urgency. In other words, let me use another phrase that the Bible uses throughout the Old Testament and the New, the fear of the Lord. This is a man who has a high and holy awe of the Lord, and he knows the Lord is sitting there right in front of him, and he is urgently seeking to minister and worship.
He personally served these men himself, then he stepped back, according to the passage, he stepped back, he stood a little bit off, in quiet humility. So here's this 99-year-old man, the heat of the day.
[51:20] Why would the Bible give us a little tidbit like that? You know, we blow past these things. Every word and every phrase and every instance of the Bible is important. Some more than others, I agree.

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But here we've got this heat of the day thing, because we've got this 99-year-old man running all over the place, getting his servants and his wife to do all this, to minister in this act of worship before the Lord.
Now he stands off in the distance, and as he watches these men, he's humbly standing, he's sweating, he's thirsty, and yet he's ministering to these men.
And you know what? He's not standing over there. This is such a burden. Oh, I'm so glad that they're here to see how hard I'm working.
I hope they realize what I'm sacrificing to do for them. No, he's off and he's ready. He's just looking for the next opportunity to just step in and do whatever is needed, however small, whatever it is.
[52:23] Nothing is too small. Nothing is too great. Oh, isn't this beautiful? This is Abraham's life. You know, we'll just stop for a minute and dig down a little bit.

The Scripture just comes alive for us. And we haven't even dealt with Sarah yet. Another thing I want to point out to you in all of this is not only a humble servant, but look, a hospitable servant.
So Abraham, I'll just say quickly, Abraham took a what's mine is yours attitude in his service to his guests. He took the blessings that he, listen, he took the blessings that he had received from God and he simply used them to serve the Lord.
He is serving the Lord out of the resources of the Lord working in his life. That's what you do. That's what I do. You serve the Lord out of the resources that God's pouring into your life.
You say, well, Jeff, I'm not aware of him pouring in. Oh, really? That's a problem. When we cease to worship God, we cease to be thankful and aware of the resources and blessing God's pouring into our lives and we don't live out of those resources.
[53:33] We live out of us. How's that work for you? It doesn't work. It's horrible. Abraham is just giving back to God based on what God's poured into him.

It's a wonderful example. It's a privilege for us to do this. Hospitality. Hospitality is our privilege. Let me give you two scriptures for the sake of the recording and for those of you taking notes.
We will not turn there for the sake of time. Matthew 25, 35. 25, 35. And Hebrews 13, 2 will be two key passage, anchor passages, speaking to this issue of hospitality being the privilege that we have as New Testament saints.
Now, this meal sets the tone for what God wanted to say. Hear this. God has a message of hope. He has a message of reassurance, comfort, peace to offer this couple.
And I think the message is especially intended for Sarah. Why do we say that? Because the passage points her out. Right? The latter part of this passage in the middle of the chapter becomes more about Sarah.
[54:47] All right? So listen. Let me do this with you real quickly. Let's talk about God's faithfulness before we close this out. Let's look at this. This is an interaction that parallels how the Lord faithfully relates to us as we struggle with responses to God which reveal more of a weak faith.

So look. God demonstrated faithfulness by His confirmation. Let's look at it. Verse 9. Then they said to Him, Where is Sarah your wife?
So these men spoke up, probably the Lord speaking as the spokesman. Where is Sarah your wife? And He said there in the tent. Now, did the Lord not know where Sarah was? He knew.
How did He know? Because He's God. Dora, you get a gold star. You're the teacher's pet for today. Dora's right on. So look. Verse 10.
He said, I will surely return to you at this time next year. And behold, Sarah your wife will have a son. Now folks, that promise had already been made to them and now it's being reasserted.
[55:49] And Sarah was listening at the tent door which was behind him. And now Abraham and Sarah were old. They were advanced in age. She was way past childbearing. So Abraham's 99.

Sarah is 89. And Sarah laughed within herself saying, After I've become old shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also.
Now look. The scene is indicative of the custom of the day. Someone of Abraham's prominence. Someone of his social stature. It's customary for his wife to kind of be secluded from the male guests.
That was an issue of propriety in that particular culture. It was a sign of courtesy and respect shown by the host in his household to the guests.
So, the question on the table is, Where is Sarah your wife? Now the Lord knows where she is. He knows she's standing just behind the tent door. It focuses the conversation on her.

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[56:44] And likely, had the effect of drawing her in to what was about to be said. It made Sarah more attentive and ensure that she was going to hear the confirmation that came in verse 10.

At this time next year, Sarah your wife will have a son. Alright? So, at what? 90 years old, Sarah's going to have a wife.
At 100 years old, Abraham is going to father a son. Now this question, look up on the screen, this question reveals the heart and purpose of the visit.
The Lord is really talking to Sarah for her benefit. It's as if the Lord is saying, you know, I have something to say to her. When God speaks, it's important. Sarah indeed heard what was said, but she couldn't get past verse 11.
The result of her situation in verse 11 came out in her weak faith in verse 12. Abraham and Sarah were old and past childbearing. So, what happened?
[57:44] What was the result of that unbelief? that weak faith? Sarah laughed within herself. She laughed at the proposition that God could do this, would do this, promised to do this.

Now, the tragedy here, look, the screen, the tragedy here is that Sarah is in the right place to hear God's truth in a physical way, but her heart wasn't prepared to hear God's truth with faith in the spiritual sense.
This is why we want to be careful that we don't come into situations like this and we're here in a physical sense but our hearts are not ready to hear the word. We're not prepared. This is kind of where Sarah is right now.
God doesn't leave Sarah to wallow and live in her lack of faith. Again, I want to point out to you, this isn't the kind of unbelief that an unbeliever has. This is a weak faith.
Sarah believes in the Lord but in this moment with this issue she's very weak. You understand that she spent her entire adult life until she's now 89 years old barren.
[58:49] So as a grown woman she has not been able to conceive and have a child and I've told you in the past that in that culture that was a sign of God's dealing with you in a punishing way.

So it was something that was dishonoring in her life and she's carried that her entire adult life. And so now God's telling her we're going to take care of that.
He lovingly acts on Sarah's behalf and he confronts the situation and challenges her. Sarah, look beyond what you see and embrace the promise that I've made to you.
Embrace the promise through the gift of faith. And he's also demonstrating this by his confrontation. Not just confirming the promise but now confronting the issue.
I've told you before please hear this friends I've told you before I'm very grateful for how the Bible doesn't gloss over it doesn't omit human realities of walking with God.
[59:46] We see people in the scriptures at their best and at their worst. This part of the passage ends with some descriptions of the physical and spiritual frailties that Abraham and Sarah have.

If you look at verse 12 you'll notice what's being said here. Sarah laughed within herself after I've become old. After I've become old. Here what we're dealing with is the idea old means worn out used up completely.
I'm no longer effective in this way. My body will not sustain this. It never has and now that I'm older it's only complicated by that reality.
This is what she's thinking. She's putting a spin on all of it but it shows us how superficially she understood what was involved in God's promise to her.
She's focused on the physical and she's not allowing the spiritual to dictate. Alright? And then also in verse 12 you see this. You see a weak faith not a complete absence of faith but a weak anemic faith resulting from circumstances or resulting from living by sight.
[60:54] In verse 12 she says will I have pleasure. Now this idea of pleasure can also be translated delight. What are we dealing with here? Sexual delight. This is what she's talking about.

She's referring to physical intimacy between her and Abraham. Abraham. And so in addition to all the other obstacles she and Abraham were not were not and for some time apparently had not been enjoying physical intimacy at such an advanced age.
That probably had more to do with Abraham than it did with her but nevertheless barrenness beyond menopause Abraham's advanced age absence of intimacy all of that was combining to eat away at her faith.
She's looking at all that and going God made a promise yeah but I got this and this and this and this and this and she made a list in her mind. Look we're frail creatures with limitations folks.

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Life is real and life listen is hard. Life is so hard. Life is cruel. Life ends like that.
[62:02] People suffer in some of the most insane ways. So again this is a weak faith. Sarah was suffering from a shallow sin.

It's her Lord but notice this on the screen Sarah also revealed her heart as she laughed within herself and the God who sees into the heart and from whom no secret thing is hidden hears her laugh inside.
In other words folks listen God heard her self-talk see it on the screen there. God heard her self-talk as she reasoned away God's promise to her.
So you kind of got this you've got these three men and the Lord is the prominent one and you've got Abraham and they're just outside the tent the tent door is closed and you've got Sarah and she's this is Sarah right and now you can imagine as they're talking the question comes where is your wife Sarah now this is Sarah I'm sure this it got her attention didn't it that's what the Bible says it got her attention now and now she listens intently at this time next year I'm going to show up again and Sarah is going to have a baby by you you'll have a son and she backs off and she laughs within herself and she has these self-thoughts all hidden nothing verbally expressed as she stands there and it takes her aback and she thinks to herself I haven't been with my husband and so and now that's going to happen and I'm going to have a baby come on this is the attitude the human attitude that she has she's shocked now listen it also says that she's scared she's scared because now something happens that she didn't anticipate for sure verse 13 and the
Lord said to Abraham why did Sarah laugh and Abraham is probably going yeah I didn't hear anybody laugh because he's not God why did Sarah laugh saying shall I indeed bear a child when I'm so old is anything too difficult for the Lord at the appointed time I'm going to return to you this time next year and Sarah will have a son and now we have Sarah inside the tent hearing all of this why did Sarah laugh he knows I said that within myself I am thinking in that moment conviction began to wash over her right but notice how she responded Sarah why did you laugh oh I didn't laugh I did not laugh no but you did laugh now folks that changed her life in that moment it changed her life it changed the course of how she thought about
[65:22] God in that moment she went from thinking that God has made me barren and I'll be barren the rest of my life and this is just the lot that I have in life not believing the promise that had been made over a decade before that she would have a son by Abraham himself the two of them would have it they've grown a decade older now look at what's going on instead of resting in that promise God is going to bring her from the point of her greatest weakness in her relationship with him to a point where her heart is going to soar in her worship of this God who's going to have so much grace on her life and it's going to change her at 89 years old folks this is the power of your God he's never through with you until you stop breathing and you join him in heaven he's not through whatever your life's going to look like he's not done till he's done and he gets to say when he's done you just keep worshiping you have one primary aim goal in life be a worshipper of the

Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart mind soul and strength love him love him and live like that looks like you did laugh and it changed her life he confronted her and he didn't leave her to wallow in that weak unbelief he brought her where she needed to be how do we know that all right look at this verse by faith even Sarah herself received!
Do you see where she went? That's Hebrews she went from that weakness to considering him faithful I want to believe that right near that moment she went wow this is really going to happen this is really going to happen I'm going to have a baby with that guy out there that I've been married to all these years God's going to make that happen wow imagine folks as I close imagine if God left you where you are now in your walk and in your faith or if God had left you where you were two years ago in your spiritual life look where you are now compared to two years ago what if he left you where you were two years ago now if you say to me well I haven't don't say that to me if you do say that we're going to drop to our knees right then and start repenting and then we'll start talking about how to change that up aren't you glad that
God doesn't leave us where we are he continues to bring us where he wants us to be he doesn't leave you where you are because he loves you because he loves you he disciplines you he designs and purposes trials in your life to bring you beyond where you are to conform you to the image of his son Jesus Christ so this is what I want to leave you with now before I pray don't grow hard in your hardships let God take you beyond the hard to soften your heart to make your heart more malleable to his will to his purposes!

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and designs for your life don't waste your privilege to know the greater depths of God in his caring for you will you join me in prayer dear father in heaven we thank you that the depths of your word are beyond our finding out but in the power of the spirit we trust that you will take us into your word and help us see what we need to see to be made worshippers of the Lord Jesus Christ God I thank you for these souls who are here today I thank you for our visitors who came they chose to be with us today and you ordained in purpose that they would be here to hear this message and so I pray that each one of us would take what you have shared with us in the way of the treasure of your truth and help us to honor you help us to live for you as your worshippers help us to bow our hearts in humble service help us to in our minds stand just off in the distance ready hands heart mind feet ready to serve you in the smallest or greatest of ways just help us to be willing help us to be willing and to persevere almighty
[69:56] God in what is true! We thank you for him crucified buried and raised again that we might have life in his name and forgiveness of sins forever in his name we pray and for his glory amen

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