



By Faith (Part 5) – Abraham

Pastor Tim Hawks – March 19, 2017

Well good morning, Chapel family! So great to be with you today and to celebrate with you God and who He is and what He's doing through this church. I just want you all to know how proud I am of how God is using you in the city of Buffalo and how your example for unifying the church to reach every man, woman and child with the gospel of Jesus Christ is actually an inspiration to churches in cities all across the United States and I just want to thank you for that example. I also want to thank you for your investment, your financial investment, the investment of Jerry's time and your team and you leadership and what you guys are putting in is actually making a difference in cities all across the country and we know that our country needs a revival. We know that the gospel of Jesus Christ needs to go out in power and authority through the lives of the people of Jesus, that's the hope for our nation and so what you guys are investing and how you're doing this is making a huge difference and so I just want to thank for your investment and your contribution.

I also want to thank you for your Pastor. So I've got a little quiz for you, okay? Here's the quiz. When it comes to expertise, you guys know Jerry

better than I do, well maybe not. So when it comes to expertise of the three topics that I ask him to speak on which one of those would you vote for that he's most expert in: sex, money, politics, yeah, not many of you are voting, I guess you know that if you guys give that away he may preach a series on those three, the big three, right? And so he invited me in and all he asked me to do was be the faith pastor, to speak on faith. So I appreciate that. Now Jerry's a great friend, we've gone back a long time, we've been dreaming for years about how to re-evangelize the United States and I'm so grateful to be in partnership with him. I hope you all know, I really hope you all know that there are names of pastors that float around in this country. But when it comes to men who have the humility and the faithfulness to Scripture, the commitment to be authentic in the way they live their lives and the love that Jerry possesses you guys have one of the greatest pastors in all of the United States and I'm so grateful for him.

So here's my question for you. Okay, my question for you is this: Are you a settler or are you a pioneer? Settler or a pioneer. Now settlers, they're comfortable with making their home here. Pioneers are not simply vagabonds that are restless and they're wandering and they can't find a place to park. It's not about them being wanderers it's about them being unsatisfied. They're just not satisfied with here being the place that they land. In other words, they're looking for something more. They're looking for something greater. They're looking for something better and they're not willing to settle and one of the greatest problems I think we have in the church of Jesus Christ today is too many people willing to settle for a secular dream, the American dream and not be willing to follow Jesus into

the adventure of faith. So pioneering and faith-walking are very similar in nature because pioneering and faith-walking, it's looking at the future with the hope that there's someone that's going to take me to a place that I can't get to on my own.

In fact, the definition that we've been using throughout this series is that faith is hope's foundation and a telescope to the future. So as we've been looking at the book of Hebrews chapter 11 this is our definition, faith lays a foundation on which hope builds and hope shows me, it provides the telescope to see the future. If I have that now I have confidence to follow Jesus and not simply settle for this life.

So let me ask you, what's it going to take? What's it going to take for you to be happy, what's it going to take for you to settle in? What is it for you, is it if I get a degree, if I get this college degree I'll be okay. I'll be okay. Is it the apartment that you're after, the home you're seeking? Maybe it's to get a snowblower that actually blows the snow out of your driveway? A series of vacations that take you to all of the national parks, is it a business that you've been planning to launch or is it success or a raise or a promotion or a retirement package? I mean what is it that you think if I could get this, if I had that, if this was the way my life began to shape up I would be happy, I'd be able to settle, I'm set, this is what I need. Or do you find yourself being propelled on a journey with Jesus that's causing disruption, that's causing stimulation, that's causing frustration, that's causing you to trust and try and seek and push out the boundaries, not being willing to simply say okay, well this is what everybody else in my neighborhood does, this is

what everybody at my school does, this is what everybody at my work does, this is what we do and just fit in, settle.

Now the person that we're going to be looking at today is Abraham and his wife Sarah. And Abraham and Sarah get the most attention, the longest section in Hebrews chapter 11. So I want to encourage you, if you've got a Bible turn to Hebrews chapter 11 or go online and look at that, we're going to be looking at a lot of Scripture today, a lot of Scripture today and we're going to walk through this and I want you to see many applicable things to you as a person who desires to be a pioneer or traveler with Jesus.

But before we go any further, let me just say to the people that thought that Tim Hawkins was going to be here today, I just want to apologize to you. Okay, I don't know if there was a typo someplace or, I don't know. But I'm not funny, okay? So just to cover you, okay, just to cover you I want us to take a moment and open our hearts to Jesus to speak to us. So I'm going to ask you to do something really weird, but you're in church, right? You're at The Chapel or one of the campuses or you're watching on TV, so you're used to doing things that are a little bit beyond your comfort zone, right, so here's what I'm going to ask you to do. I'm going to ask you to take the hand of the person sitting next to you. Just take the hand of the person sitting next to you, it may be cold but that's why you're there, to warm them up. Just take the hand of the person sitting next to you. What I'm going to do is I'm going to pray a prayer for us and as I pray this prayer for us, if you in your heart would just join me in this prayer for yourself, okay?

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we are so grateful that you are here with us. We pray Lord Jesus that you would open up our hearts, open up my heart so that through your Word and through your Spirit you may show me what you want me to know, what you want me to do and give me the courage to hear your voice today. I give this time and my attention to you Lord Jesus. Amen.

Okay, let's dive in. Hebrews chapter 11. We see in this journey that Abraham and Sarah find themselves on, that they first realized that the call is to go. The call is to go and if you want to be a pioneer you can't settle, you've got to be willing to go. So, in Hebrews chapter 11 starting in verses 8-10 it says: "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place" so first thing is he's called to go, right, to go. "When called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance," now it's interesting the wording because he's not receiving it, in other words he's not going and when he gets there God gives him the keys and says this is your thing, man and he looks around and goes wow, what a spread this is mine! He doesn't actually own a piece of the property in the Promised Land until he's prepared to bury his wife, Sarah. And then he buys a burial plot, that's the only piece of real estate Abraham will ever personally own. So he's going to a land, he's going to receive it as an inheritance, "he obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."

Now that's interesting. So he's in what we see as modern-day Iraq and he's going to end up in the land of Palestine, but when God tells him to go he doesn't give him a GPS location, He doesn't say you know, pull out your Google Maps, and I'm going to mark a spot and you just keep going until

you get to there. He has no idea, so the call is to venture or adventure into a journey where you do not know where you're going. All you know is who you're following. Your trail-boss Jesus is the one who's taking you on that journey. Remember what Jesus said in Luke chapter 9? In Luke chapter 9, He said this, He said if anyone would come after me, what's the implication? Jesus is going someplace. If anyone wants to go with Jesus you've got to move, you've got to go, if anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me, for whoever wants to save his life loses it, whoever loses his life for me will save it, the call is to go on the journey.

So we'll keep going here in Hebrews chapter 11, "By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents," he lived in tents, any of you guys live in tents?

So like we came up with this really cool idea. When our kids were little, we've got four kids and so it's going to be really expensive to go on vacation and stay in a hotel and travel and all that stuff, so let's just get a tent. So the first time we tried it, with four kids under six years old we thought to ourselves "it can't really be this bad". And so we tried it one more time. And then we gave the tent away. I mean we don't live in tents, do we? We venture into tents from time to time but we don't live in tents.

Abraham never had a domicile to live in. He's on a journey. He's following God's plan. So, they lived in tents, and not only did "he live in tents but Isaac and Jacob lived in tents, who were heirs with him of the same

promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." He is looking for a city, he's looking for a city.

Now later on in verse 13 we pick up that all of these people that we've looked at so far were looking to the future, something better for them. So in Hebrews chapter 11 verses 13 it says: "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance," That's the telescope idea, they're looking and they're welcoming them from a distance, "admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity the opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country-a heavenly one" and because of that "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them."

Now two real important thoughts here. He says, if these people were not looking for something better they would have gone back to what they had. That's the whole theme of the book of Hebrews. This group of Jewish believers who had come to faith are now finding themselves under heavy persecution. They're losing their homes, they're losing their businesses, some of them are being swept up and put in jail. And so the thinking is well, Christianity is outlawed in the empire, but Judaism is not, since we come from Judaism maybe we should go back there. And the writer of the Hebrews is saying oh no, you can't go back there because of Jesus. You've got to follow Jesus. Jesus is the answer. He's superior to everything else.

You guys travel through the whole book of Hebrews and that first message looking at all the things that Jesus is superior to, you can't go back because God has a city prepared for you. Now, such a phenomenal book. I hope you guys will take the time to read through the whole thing.

But in chapter 12, the very next chapter it starts with Jesus going to the cross and it ends with Jesus giving them a city. Jesus starts with going to the cross, and it ends with Jesus giving them a city. In fact, let me just read this quickly. In Hebrews chapter 12, in fact, let's just do this. I want you to visualize yourself covered in a linen robe white as snow because of the cross of Jesus. I know, some of you guys might not like white, but can you see yourself, now what I want you to do is close your eyes and as I read through the entrance to the city this is what it looks like walking into the city, this is what they dreamed about. Listen to what it says: "But you have come to Mt. Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, you're standing at the gates, you have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, you're passing the angelic choir as you're going into the city. The church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven. You've come to God, the judge of all men. You're walking right into the presence of God, to the spirits of the righteous men made perfect. All the saints are there and then here's in the center, to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant, to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than that blood of Abel." And then he says this to you: "See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. Jesus is calling you to a life of faith. You've got to go with Him. And what you have before you is the most unbelievable permanent dwelling-place where you will experience the kingdom of God

in technicolor and forever and ever and ever you will walk with Jesus in perfection. Don't you want to follow Him? Who could refuse Him who speaks?

Well, let's go back to the story. I want to take you back to Genesis and give you a little bit of the story of this journey that Abraham is on and Genesis chapter 12 verse 1 we read that "The Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.'" in other words, what I want you to do is leave everything behind, everything important in this world and I want you to go, but you're not going to know where it is until you get there.

Now dropping down to verse 7 we read "The Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give you this land.'" So he traveled, he got there, then God said oh, you're here, so what does he do when he gets in the land? "He built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east." Watch. "And there he built an altar to the Lord and", look at this, "He called on the name of the Lord."

What is he doing? He's building altars and he's calling on the name of the Lord. Now some of you may say well, like what do you mean? Well, here's what he's doing. He doesn't get to the land and go "wow, I've found my place". He gets to the land and immediately begins to dedicate it to his God. He sets up places of worship throughout the land and that phrase in the Hebrew, to call upon the name of the Lord, is the term that we would use to preach the gospel. In other words, he sets up an altar and then he begins

to proclaim to the people in the area God, Yahweh, the God who called him, the God who made promises to him, the God who sent him there to occupy the land. He immediately goes on mission with God and begins to evangelize the people in the area.

You see what's happening? He's not just saying, okay God, if you're going to give me a better place to live then I'll travel there, he realizes that the call of God to go is the journey of a lifetime and he accepts that. My question to you is are you a settler or are you on the journey of a lifetime with Jesus?

I just want to be honest with you guys, like it's great to preach out of town because I can confess all my sins to you, so let me just give to you a few things. Several years ago God really started convicting me about areas where I was settling. Where I was just settling. And let me just give you a couple of them. One of the areas that I found was because I'm so involved with people all the time, I had decided that my house would be my retreat, like when I went home my wife Cindy and I, like we'd just hang out, you know, pull the blinds down, kind of like be there, just kind of enjoy the retreat from everything else. And then Jesus started talking to me about settling for that. And Jesus just pointed out to me the greatest commandment. Love the Lord with all your heart, soul mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. And God said to me, Tim I've placed people a hundred feet from you. All the way around you that need me and I put you here for them. I want you to give up the settled comfort of your retreat and go meet your neighbors. That has been a fascinating change. I love my neighbors now. We've had them in our home, we've seen two of them come to Christ already and when my neighbors from across the back

fence come to our house, knock on our door, want to walk in and talk about spiritual things, when I've got a neighbor who is a Jewish college president, agnostic, whose brother is sick and she comes to my house and asks me to pray with her, like this is fun. Like following Jesus is fun, but I wasn't there. I needed to be bumped out of my comfort and into the journey.

Let me give you a couple more. One of the things that I kind of settled on is, I've got four kids and they're all in their twenties, the oldest one about to turn thirty and I've kind of gotten to the point where I started thinking to myself, really, like I've done all I can for these kids. You know, I've disciplined them, I've built in to them, I've done all that I can for these kids. And God just started speaking to me and saying "Tim, you are not passionately praying for your children because even though you will cover, like take care of this, fix this for them, help them with this, guide them in this area, the idea that you would be praying diligently, fervently, passionately for transformation, you have done all you can for them, but I haven't. But I haven't. I'm a better dad than you will ever be. And God just really started convincing me and convicting me that I needed to move out of the "like I've kind of done my parenting, and now I'm just a counselor and a guide to interceding for them at a level that I've never interceded for them before. And God just kind of broke me out of that. That was moving me out of settling and starting to push me into more aggressive activity for Him.

The third area I'll just confess to you, I've gotten so busy working with our staff and working with our church planters and working with people in leadership that I really quit doing personal discipleship with men. And God

really challenged me on that. The basic call of all Christians is to have some people that you are forming into disciples of Jesus Christ who will then turn around and reproduce others. So if you find me on Thursday night you're going to find me at the dinner table with two doctors and an attorney and we're opening the Word of God and we're teaching them how to pray, how to have a quiet time and how to share their faith. How to build their family and lead their family. How to incorporate God's principles into their workplace. How to be dynamic disciples of Jesus. And in August they're going to take guys and start doing the same thing and I'm going to move on and take some more guys. So I just personally want to confess before you that everybody can find themselves settling. And you quit living on the journey with Jesus, this changing you, this convicting you, this growing you, this pushing you out to do more to follow Him.

So, the first thing we see in the life of Abzraham and Sarah is they're called to go, that's part of the pioneer journey. The second thing we see is that they are given a promise. But the promise also comes with a huge delay, and they're required to wait. So they go, but they go with a promise, and they're required to wait.

Now, the promise that God gave them was they would have children, that they would have offspring. And the delay was significant. Well, they didn't start out as spring chickens.

So, if you'll look here with me at Hebrews 11, verse 11 and 12. It says, "And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise."

Now as we look at this, I want you to recognize that when the promise first came, Sarah was 65 and Abraham was 75. So, at that point in time, you're kind of thinking, that's going to be really interesting, right? Like that will be really interesting to see grandma and grandpa have babies. But the promise was delayed. "And so from this one man, and he as good as dead," I mean as far as putting forward offspring, good as dead, "came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore."

Now, the promise came true, and we actually even know more about it than the writer of Hebrews. When he wrote these words, we know that the Jewish race has multiplied across the earth. Abraham is also the father of Ishmael, so that would be the Arab races that have multiplied across the earth. But also, through Abraham's family, the Messiah came. And so all the believers in Jesus Christ become Abraham's spiritual children, leading to billions and billions of people that are a part of his family. But at the time, the promise came, was there any hope?

So, here's what I want to do. A lot of us feel this way. God, why make me a promise and make we wait? Why make me a promise and make we wait? I really believe in the passage, there are three reasons why God actually makes us wait. So, I want us to unpack these together, so you can understand why God would do that to us. Why would God make a promise and then make us wait?

So, we're going to go all the way back to the story. And back in the story, in Genesis chapter 17, God is going to confirm his promise to Abraham. And I

want you to see how God unpacks that. So let's look at this together. So in Genesis chapter 17, God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

Now watch what Abraham does. Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself.. so before you blame Sarah for laughing, Abraham started this thing. Okay? Abraham starts laughing, and he says to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old?" So do the math. The promise came at age 75. He's waited for 25 years! And every day, he gets older, and older and older. "Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" Whoa! Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!" Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

Now what is God doing here? What God is doing it this: waiting ensures that no human explanation can explain God's miracle. Seventy-five and sixty-five? Not likely. But maybe. But 25 years later, 100 and 90? There's no way. And oftentimes, I think God makes us wait, because what God is doing is clearing out all of the ways we would give circumstantial credit to the fulfillment of his promises. All the way that we would come up with human explanation to show us that he keeps his promises by doing miracles.

Here's the next one. A couple of days later, the angels show up, and God shows up, and ask the question. Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said. Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son."

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. You think? So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord is so old, will I now have this pleasure?"

Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son." Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "Hey, I did not laugh." Now, that word laughter is going to come up big in the text.

What is God doing here? God is choosing to show us the magnitude of the happiness that will be accumulated because of the delay. When we get things immediately, the instant gratification of humanity tends to kick in. And we kind of even get to a point where we expect it to happen.

Sarah doesn't expect this to happen. She's got a promise. But here's what she says. Will I have the pleasure? Really? Is that even possible? Her imagination now is growing, because 25 years have gone by.

Well, what happens when she has the child? Genesis 21. Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had

promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

You see, waiting makes us understand that the future that God has for us is greater than what we could ever expect. And so, she says listen, I got this kid. I'm calling him Isaac, which in the Hebrew means laughter. And everybody that sees me nursing a child, they're going to burst out laughing. Because the sight of a 90 year old woman nursing a baby that she gave birth to. That can be nothing but the incredible gracious gift of an amazing God!

And oftentimes, God puts us in a situation where He'll make a promise, but he won't show us the magnitude of how he's going to answer it until later. Because what that does in us, is it focuses on how good and great and gracious and amazing He really is.

My question to you - are you waiting on any promises? Has God made any promises to you that you've given up on? You don't see any answers? You prayed, and you sought God, and you ask Him. And it just seems like it's been a long time. Are you waiting on Him?

Personally, I had one of these wild experiences a number of years ago. I want to share it with you. We at our church were going through a giving campaign. We've gone through several of them over the years to buy and construct our facilities, and then to fund missionary work and church planting and so forth.

We were in the middle of the biggest one that we'd ever done before. And the timing of it was very interesting, because it was going to be a three year campaign, and I had my first child, a freshmen in high school. So, the rest of them trickled down from there. So, four kids, she was the oldest, a freshmen in high school. And we were praying through this decision. And God told my wife and I, Jesus said, here's what you need to give. And we both gulped real hard, and said that is not a possibility.

So while we were kind of stalling for God to change His mind and kind of get realistic, and come up with something that was actually feasible to do, we sat down with our children. And we thought, we wanted to bring them into our prayer process, and what God was doing. So we sat down with our kids.

And while we're sitting there, my daughter Kate, a freshmen in high school, she starts asking these probing questions. And she asked the question, she says, well, how much was the last campaign. And I told her. And she said, well how much did God lead you to give to that one? And I told her. And she said, well how much is this one? Well, it's about twice as much. And she said, why wouldn't you give twice a much?

Kids! Like, they don't understand retirement. They don't understand fluctuations in the market. They don't understand that. They do understand pastors don't make a lot of money. They don't understand that kind of stuff.

And she's saying, like, the amount, the double amount was the amount that Jesus told us to give. And I looked at Kate, and I said, Kate I just want you to know this. You're a freshmen in high school, and you want to go to college? But if we give this money, we will not have anything to help you at all with your college. And she just simply said, well I guess if Jesus is telling us to do it, we gotta do it, right? We should do it. And so, we committed.

And over the next three years, while she was growing up through high school and developing her dreams of where she wanted to go to college and all that kind of stuff, God was working miracles in her life. We cut back on our lifestyle. We did all kinds of things. But God just actually poured money in places we never expected. And we were able to give God all that he told us to give. We gave all that.

But now, she starts applying to all of these expensive colleges. And I'm like, yeah that's not going to work! Until Southern Methodist University decided to give Kate the President's scholarship, which amounted to exactly what we gave to Jesus. Exactly. Now, I didn't know that that was going to happen. We had to wait! But it happened, and it happened so clearly, that there was no way that I could come up with any other explanation.

But that's not all! The next year, my son gets a full scholarship from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill! They paid for him to go to school.

Two years later, my daughter gets a scholarship from Stetson, half volleyball, half academics, they paid for her school. Two years later, my youngest son, who admittedly is a little bit spoiled, ok? I have no question he's not listening to this. So, I'm okay with that. He's a little bit spoiled. He didn't do so well academically. But the University of Alabama Rolltide gave him a full tuition scholarship.

God is so good! He's so faithful. I had to wait. I didn't know that was going to happen. And I certainly didn't have to wait 25 years, but we've watched God work. I hope you are too. When you're willing to go in faith, when you're willing to take those promises and wait on those, God will do amazing things in your life.

There's one more that we see here in this passage. We go, we wait, and sometimes that pioneering spirit that faith calls us to obey, even in the most severest and difficult tests of all.

Watch what happens in Hebrews chapter 11 verses 17 through 19. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, (okay this was God), when he was tested, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son. So amazing that the promise now becomes the threat. The promise now becomes the threat. The thing that makes life worthwhile now becomes the thing that Abraham is challenged. Does this mean more to you than I do? Even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." That sounds like a promise, right? So how can he be sacrificing his son if the offspring is the

promise? Watch this. Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

Now here's what's interesting. When you are severely tested, and God puts before you a challenge that will take you places that you did not believe that you had the faith or the courage to go, if you step into this, here's what God is going to do. He's going to open your mind to possibilities that are currently unimaginable to you. Abraham is now saying, God if you promise this, and I sacrifice Isaac, then I have to believe that you are capable of resurrection! And not theoretical resurrection or Easter resurrection or the resurrection of Jesus, because actually resurrection in my family with my child. I can obey you, because I can't give away or do anything that you will not resurrect. That is a faith-building, mind-blowing moment, that Abraham goes, God, you've got to be up to something way bigger than me.

So what was God up to? Watch this. Let's go back to Genesis. Genesis 22. Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Laughter. Take Laughter! ...your only son, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about. Take Laughter and silence him.

So, many of you know the story. He packs up the stuff, and takes the wood, and takes the fire, and takes the knife. And they're going, and Isaac is asking along the way, like, where is the sacrifice? We're not taking any animals? And Abraham says to him, God will provide the sacrifice. But when they get there, Abraham ties him up like an animal that he would

have tied up, puts him on the altar, and is ready to plunge the knife into him, because he believes that Isaac will not remain dead. He will rise from the dead.

And watch what happens. God yells from heaven, "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. To this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

Here's what happened in that exchange. Abraham gave God the opportunity to demonstrate to the world something that was coming. That Abraham could have never anticipated. That Abraham died without really knowing about. But as you are here today, you know what this is about. Because in the same way that a father who loved laughter raises his knife to take his life, and hoped beyond hope that God, somehow, you're going to raise him from the dead. The Father, in that same region puts his son Jesus Christ on a cross. He brings down the hammer into the nails. He brings down the lash on his back. That Father did not spare his son. Why? Because he was providing a covering for sin. He was taking the sins of the world. And then God would raise Jesus back to life, so that all of your sins could be covered. My sins could be covered. That we could experience resurrection in him and live his life! That's what God was doing, he was providing.

And Abraham, by way of his obedience, set the platform, gave the testimony to what the Father in heaven was like. That's why Abraham was called a friend of God. Because Abraham knew more about God than any other person on the planet during that period of time. Because he was willing to obey.

If you want more of God, step into obedience. If you want to experience God, you've got to journey with him, you've got to believe His promises even in the waiting, and you have to do what he calls you to do. You see, God has a plan for you. That plan involves you being a part of his kingdom. That plan involves you going public with your testimony. That plan involves you investing your time, talents and treasures to see people know Him and have a relationship with Him. And all of that is not simply to put you as a work horse on the back of the gospel. It gives you a chance, like Abraham had, to actually participate in and experience the gospel, which is the best life you could ever lead.

Are you settling? Are you settling? Have you kind of gone into the groove? You got your five year and ten year plan? If all that comes together, you're set? Or are you on an incredible adventure with God? My prayer for you is that God would have the freedom to call you, and you'd say, I'll go. I'll go. That God would have the freedom to make promises to you, and that you would wait to see the magnificent work of His hands. That God would put tests before you that drew out of you the kind of obedience that He could then show Himself in glory to you. That's my prayer for you. Will you step in? Pioneer or settler? Let's pause and pray.

Father in heaven, I know that you care about every single person. That you have a plan for each one, and that your son Jesus longs to take each person deeper and further in the journey of faith. May you remove all fear. And give us the courage to run, to know you, and the power of your resurrection, and experience with you the fellowship of life, suffering and serving you. May no one leave without fully giving their heart to Jesus. Amen.