



THE BEGINNINGS!

The Book of Genesis

Faith and death!

Genesis 23:1-20

Message #25 of 50 – S925

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@ Calvary Chapel French Valley, Murrieta, CA



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

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Opening Comments

- Good morning – turn to **Genesis 23**
- Today we continue our journey through **Genesis: THE BEGINNINGS!**
- The book of Genesis has many beginnings
- But it also includes some endings, including the ending of life
- And here in Genesis 23 we are told that Sarah, Abraham's lifelong companion and wife dies
- Death is never easy to talk about
- But death has been a part of the human experience since Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden
- And being a faithful Christian doesn't exclude us from that reality
- And sadly, we have several families that have been touched by the pain of separation and loss caused by a loved one passing from this life
- Being a Christian doesn't make losing a loved one easier, but it does make it different
- And that difference can make all the difference when we are faced with the end of life
- Let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to teach us, comfort us, and give what we need today
- Pray for those who have recently lost loved ones
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Faith and death!**
- Chapter 23 is about a man of faith dealing with great loss
- In the last chapter Abraham was tested by God
- God told Abraham to take his son Isaac and sacrifice him
- In an act of incredible faith, Abraham did what God asked him to do
- God stopped Abraham from going through with it and repeated the great promises that were made to him **Genesis 22:16-18**

“By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

- Abraham and Isaac returned to Hebron and life settled into a comfortable routine
- And then life was interrupted
- **Genesis 23:1**
- Sarah is the only woman in the Bible whose age is mentioned at death
- It was common for women to marry while in their late teens
- So, it is very likely Abraham and Sarah had been married for over 100 years
- She was with Abraham as he lived in the pagan land of Ur where the moon goddess was worshipped, and human sacrifice was not uncommon
- She was with him when he heard the call to leave Ur to go to Canaan
- She was there when he experienced great victories and when he made faithless mistakes
- She was with him as he received the great promises of God
- Abraham loved Sarah and he had loved her for a very long time
- But now she was gone
- **Genesis 23:2**
- This is the first place in the Bible where the words ‘mourn’ and ‘weep’ are used
- Nowhere in the Bible are people of faith told they shouldn’t mourn and weep the loss of their loved ones
- Solomon, the wisest man to live said **Ecclesiastes 3:4**
There is...a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance...
- Then Paul tells us that a believer’s sorrow is different than someone who doesn’t believe in God and trust in His Word **1 Thessalonians 4:13**
But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.
- In the face of the loss of a loved one, the difference between a believer and non-believer is hope

- For the non-believer there is no hope – to them, death is the end
- Not so for the Christian – physical death is not the end
- The foundational truth of the gospel is that faith in Jesus results in the promise of resurrection from the dead to eternal life in heaven with Jesus **John 5:24**

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

- The hope of every true believer is that death is not the end
- It is not the end for me and it is not the end for those I love who have gone before me
- This is why Paul refers to the death of a believer with the idiom of being asleep **1 Corinthians 15:20**

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

- Hope is a powerful thing in the life of a believer, especially in the face of tragedies and loss
- When my sister passed away a few years ago, I was not convinced she was saved
- My mom believed she was – my hope is that my mom knew something I didn't and that my sister might be waiting for us in heaven
- The power of hope is not in what we know but in God **Romans 15:13**
Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- When my mom passed away last year, I was convinced that she had gone to be with the Lord and my hope is that I will see her again someday
- That was a comfort to me as I mourned the loss of my mother
- There is one last thing Abraham has to do for his beloved wife
- **Genesis 23:3-4**

- Abraham and Sarah had lived in the land of Canaan for 62 years
- But notice how he refers to himself 'a foreigner and a visitor'
- Abraham believed God's promise of all the land of Canaan
- He was waiting for God to keep that promise **Hebrews 11:9-10**

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

- It was an act of faith to seek a burial place for Sarah
- Abraham was staking a claim to the promises of God
- We also have great and precious promises from God, like **Philippians 3:20-21**

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

- There are things that come into our lives that test what we believe
- The death of someone close tests the power of what you believe. Faith is what we believe to be true.
- Jesus & disciples in a boat – Jesus sleeping – storm comes up – disciples freaking out – wake up Jesus – don't you care? **Matthew 8:26**

But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

- It is our faith that gets us through the storms of this faith
- If you are struggling – pray – ask God to grow your faith
- **Genesis 23:5-15**
- This was a cultural form of negotiation – this would go back and forth until a price was settled upon
- There were no coins minted at this time – shekel is a recognized weight
- Four hundred shekels was much more than the land and cave were worth
- Ephron expected Abraham to haggle him down to a lower price
- Everyone may have been surprised with Abraham's response
- **Genesis 23:16-18**
- A careful examination of this text suggests that Ephron may have been trying to take advantage of Abraham in his time of grief
- Sadly, there will always be someone trying to take advantage of another's misfortune
- Abraham didn't worry himself with that
- God had blessed him and promised to keep blessing him
- Abraham trusted God to keep His word
- The name 'Sarah' means 'princess' – no price was too high for his princess

- **Genesis 23:19-20**

- God had promised all the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants
- After 62 year all he possesses is a field with a cave to bury his dead
- Later Abraham would be buried there and then Isaac and Rebekah and lastly Jacob and Leah
- Jewish tradition also says that Adam and Eve were buried there – no evidence to suggest that is true
- As Moses is writing the book of Genesis hundreds of years later, this is the only land the people of Israel have a legal claim to
- Today, a mosque stands over what is believed to be the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron
- In the world there is a debate over the land of Israel
- With God there is no such debate – it is His land, and it is eternally given to His chosen people – the Jews
- Abraham lived his entire time in Canaan as a foreigner and a visitor
- He looked with faith to the fulfillment of the promises God had made to him
- The death of his beloved Sarah did not change that
- God is calling us to live in a similar manner
- This world is not our home **John 14:1-3**

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

- Our hope is not in this world or the things or people of this world
- Our hope is in Christ – our hope is in heaven **R. Kent Hughes**
Longing for Heaven is the signature of the believing soul.
- And as painful as the death of a loved one is, it should be a reminder of the hope we have
- Genesis ends with this cave being filled.
- Our hope is not in the Cave of the Patriarchs, but the empty tomb in the garden outside the city of Jerusalem.
- Put your trust in Jesus and then proclaim boldly with the Apostle Paul
Romans 8:38-39

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any

other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Hope is one of the hallmarks of a believer's life **1 Corinthians 13:13**
And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.
- Faith, hope, and love – these three things will carry you through the darkest of times and give you the strength to live a life that is good – that glorifies God, blesses others, and grows faith
- Whatever is going on in your life – faith, hope, and love
- Jesus loves you – He is preparing a place for you – **Amen?!**