



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

February 10/11, 2018 - Ezra Okoti
Tried and Tested - (Genesis 15:1-19)

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

This morning if you have a Bible, you want to go to Genesis 15. Genesis 15 is where we find ourselves, and we are continuing our series on the story of Abraham this morning. Now I'm sure many of you have friends, and the more time you spend with your friends, so let's say a new neighbour moves into the community, and you begin to get to know them, their kids, their dog and all that stuff. The more you spend time with this particular individual, and the more you hear their stories, you begin to have confidence in them, and you begin to trust them some more. And over time, you holiday with them and everything, and they become good friends. Deep friends whom you care about, and they care about you as well. Well, I have a friend like that. And this is a friend I've gotten to know for over ten years now, and he's someone I trust, I love, he's someone who...I would say he's also my mentor. This person makes fun of me a whole lot. I'm guessing you would know who this person is. His name is Jeff. So I understand that Jeff makes a lot of fun of me when he comes, and he preaches here, and makes some slight comments, right? So it's revenge. I've brought some pictures with me today too. [Laughter] So, let's get the show on.

This is my friend Jeff. So this is a picture -last November we went to Quebec City, we travelled there for a church planting conference there. So Jeff and I were there, and so this is Tourist Jeff. You know, it's a cold day, so he has his coat on and everything, so this is pretty much Jeff on the road, right? Next picture. So the next picture will show Jeff beside a store that was selling some Christmas stuff and everything. Now you may look at this picture and think, "Jeff is smiling, what a beautiful smile," but that's a fake Jeff smile. I know Jeff's smile because I know him, he's a good friend of mine, that is fake. But I mean he loves Big Christmas and all that, but yeah, that is totally fake. Next picture. Next picture, now this is Jeff trying to be cool. Now, when he's hanging out with me, I'm cool, so Jeff is me, like he wants to be me, but of course he can't be me, like look at me, look at him. So, right, this is Jeff trying to be cool. Next picture. So the next picture, now we were travelling...so when we left Quebec City we came down to Boston and on our way to Rhode Island, we were driving, and so we come to Boston, and Jeff is from that area, so we do this thing called the Freedom Trail. And if you ever go to Boston, I highly recommend, do the Freedom Trail. Especially if you love history. It's an amazing little trail. So we were doing this Freedom Trail and we come to this church, it's called King's Chapel. So we go in, and a lot of famous people in American history went there, attended there, visited there, whatever. So Jeff decides...we walk in, it's a really beautiful building, and he decides, well, because it's a church and he's a preacher, well, let him go up in the pulpit. So he climbs up, you're not allowed to go up there, but Jeff, if you know Jeff, I mean, he will do things that he's not allowed to do. Wet



paint he'll touch, that kind of thing. So this is Jeff up there trying to, I mean, embrace American history. So he's there at King's Chapel. Next picture. So Jeff is an American. So we go to a military base, it's a naval base actually, and so the ship that you see behind there, is a naval warship, one of the oldest warships in the American fleet, and so Jeff is flexing his little muscles, reminding me, the Kenyan, that the United States is strong, and Ezra, remember where you are right now. So this is just him mocking me and all that. Now, next picture. So this is just outside the Bunker Hill Monument, in Charlestown, Boston. And this is the area where Jeff's parents, but not just parents, Jeff's ancestors, when they left Europe and moved to the Americas, this is where they settled. So, this is basically Jeff's hometown. This is where his people settled in America first. And so, it was a little bit emotional for him, he was texting his dad back and forth, it was just a wonderful time. Wonderful for me to see my friend rejoicing and enjoying a little bit of American history, and also his own personal history.

Now when we were travelling on the road, we travelled for two weeks, and so he was constantly on the phone, I was constantly on the phone, talking to my family and all that, and so from time to time we would take selfies, or take pictures of each other, and we would text them to our beloved family members, right? So, we go to this restaurant, and we sit down and we're having a meal, and then I take my phone and say, "Hey Jeff, let me take a picture of you, you can send it to Jeanne, your wife, you can send it to your kids, so that they can see that Ezra hasn't killed you yet." [Laughter] So, this is the face he makes. Yes, and so if you know Jeff, this is so Jeff. This is so him. Like he's a heckler. He loves heckling people.

In fact, there was a time we went to, I think it was last year, I'm not quite sure. So he and I and Steve Wiens, our executive pastor, and Andy Steiger had travelled to a theology conference. So we get there, we do the thing and all that, and then Andy left a day early. So Steve had to spend the last night alone in his room, and Jeff and I were together. So we go for dinner, we come back, and then as we come to the hotel lobby, Steve decides to wander around the lobby, so we're going up to our room, second floor, whatever, so we're walking, Jeff and I, and we notice that there's a key, a hotel key on the floor. So we pick it up, and then we look at each other and wonder, could this be Steve's key? Now Steve wouldn't know that he's lost his key, right? So we go and we swipe it by Steve's door, and guess what? It opened. So Jeff and I look at each other and we're like, uh huh. [Laughter] So we walk in, close the door. Turn on all the lights. We were going to give Steve a good welcome. And a good welcome it was. Steve lived to tell the story, I mean he's alive, he's okay, but man, did we scare him. And that was some good times, I would say. So Jeff, my dear friend, is a heckler. Like he heckles people, teases people, and all that. Most of those whom he loves and cares for.

But my dear friend is also a very shy person. Like when you see him preaching here, like he's, <yelling> fire! But what you don't know is every weekend when Jeff is preaching, you know he comes from the curtain in the back there, and then he comes around to the pulpit here, Jeff is always praying, "Holy Spirit, fill me. Because I don't know if this sermon is good enough for these people." And he's always praying, always shy, always nervous about standing before God's people. Every weekend. And I mean every weekend. So pray for him. Every time he comes to stand in front of people, he's very aware of his own inabilities. Very aware of his own weaknesses. And he's always relying on God to help him. And he confides in me a great ton. When he was going through some of his struggles within,



I saw Jeff at a very raw moment in the season his mom died. We had travelled to Calgary, came back. At night we landed in Abbotsford airport at about midnight. Our wives had come to pick us up, so we go home. The next morning Jeff calls me, “Hey Ezzy, guess what, my mom took a fall and I have to drive out to Bellingham. Please pray that God would be with Mom.” Mom was basically fighting for her life in Bellingham I think, and then she passed away. And so, Jeff comes back home, his mom has passed, and then I whip up a quick meal for him and his family, and then I drop it off, and I come into the room, into his living room, there is Jeanne, Jeff is sitting on the couch, just distraught. Tears on his face, as you can imagine. His mom had just passed away, he was very close to his mom. And he didn’t say much, but what he said was this: “You know, God is faithful. God is faithful. God is faithful.” Even in his deepest moment. So I’m looking at my friend here, going through a very difficult time. Rather than me encouraging him, he’s encouraging me, how faithful God is. And so I’m seeing all these things.

Not only that, he’s a very generous person. So when we travel to different places, we try not to rent cars, particularly if we can use public transit. So if we can use trains, yeah we jump on a train, we buy a week pass. And we’d probably be in that city for four days but you can’t just get a four day pass, sometimes you have to buy a week pass. So we buy a week pass, and we use it. At the end of our trip, on the fourth day, on our way to the airport, Jeff would say, “He Ezzie, give me your ticket. Give me your ticket.” So I give it to him, and he would go up to a stranger and say to this stranger, it could be a lady, a man, a kid, whatever, “Hey, would you use this? We were here for this conference, whatever, we are done, it still has three days on it.” And you should see the reaction on people’s faces. They’re always just overwhelmed at the generosity. And some would say, “Hey, you know what, I was so down on my luck, I didn’t have money, tomorrow I needed to go somewhere, I didn’t have anything, and I have a friend of mine who also would make use of this. Thank you so much.” This story is so...I see this constantly with my friend Jeff.

Now there are three things he loves to talk about. The first, he talks about his family tremendously. His kids, the kids’ sports, his wife and the things they do together, he loves talking about his family. He also loves talking about Arsenal, his soccer team that sucks. [Laughter] They’re awful. Oh, they lost this weekend, praise God! They lost this weekend. And I give him a good time. I’ve yet to see him to rub it in. So he loves talking about Arsenal. But also, and I would say 80 percent of his conversations are always about God. He talks about God, he talks about God, he talks about the Word of God, constantly, constantly talking about the Word of God. Now why am I telling you all of these things about Jeff, my dear friend? I’m telling you all these things about Jeff because I have spent time with my friend, I have heard his stories, intimate stories, deep stories, stories that he’s only told me, as far as I know. And at the end of the day I would say, yeah, you know what, my confidence is in this man because I know he’s what he says he is. He’s a Christian. He’s a Christian man, and I trust him. I would trust him to take care of my family if something happened to me. He’s a Christian. I trust him.

See, the point I’m trying to make here is our text today is a story about Abraham, yeah, but it’s more so a story about God. It’s story about God. See, you and I know God. He’s journeyed with us through the highs and the lows and the in betweens of our lives, right? God has been with you through everything, through thick and thin. Think back, look back at your life and see how faithful has God



been to you? God has been faithful to you. And, you also know stories about God. Stories that are found in the biblical text. And these stories continue to give you confidence, so that you may trust in this God. And today's story is one such story. A story that I'm praying and hoping will grow confidence in God within you. I don't know what you're going through. I don't know what struggles, challenges, I don't know what weight you have coming in to this service today. But my prayer is, as we go through this story, your confidence in God would continue to grow, if not deepen. Your commitment to him would deepen and be vibrant. So we'll look at this story in two sections. The first, a promise renewed. There's a promise God gives to Abraham in Genesis 15, and this promise is renewed in this text. Secondly, a promise ratified. God backs up his promise. He signs the dotted line. He does the heavy lifting here.

[A Promise Renewed]

So a promise renewed. Genesis 15:1-7. This is what the text says:

“After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.’ But Abram said, ‘Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’ And Abram said, ‘You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.’ Then the word of the LORD came to him: ‘This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.’ He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. He also said to him, ‘I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.’”

We'll pause there for now. So Genesis 12, in that passage, what you find is God promising Abraham, calling Abraham, “Hey, leave your father's household, leave your clan, leave your people, grab all your stuff, move to the land that I'll show you.” That is Genesis 12. Now we come to Genesis 15, a whole bunch of things happen in between 12 and 15, right? So now we come to Genesis 15. How many years are we talking about here? We're talking about ten years, around about there. So this is ten years later. God had promised Abraham, “Hey, I'll make you a great nation. I'll send you to this land, you'll take possession of it and all these things.” So this is ten years later. Abraham probably still waiting for these countless descendants. So God comes to him and says, “Hey, do not be afraid. I am your shield, your very great reward.” So what God means by “I'm your shield” means, “Abraham, I will protect you. I know now you're in a foreign land, you're not with your people, you're not in your home country, you're kind of like, out there, so guess what? I will protect you.” And this “I'll be your very great reward” means, “I will provide for you as well. So don't you worry, I've got this.”

So Abraham is trying to figure out, “Okay Lord, I hear all that, but I'm just trying to make sense of the promise you gave me.” “How so?” “Because, Lord, I am 85 years old now. My wife is 84. We don't have any kids. So you say all these descendants, but Lord, how will it be? How will all this happen?” You see there are odds. There are some odds against God's promise to him. There are so many odds against his promise, it's like us. When God continually tells us that he will never leave us or forsake us.



That he's always going to be with us. That he's always going to protect us and provide for us, and all these things. Right? These are promises that you find in this book. And yet, you look around your life, and you see, hey, the doctor told me that it's going to get from bad to worse. Or, it will be the banker who keeps calling the house and saying, "Hey, we need you to make the payments." You need to get the payment because God impressed on you to start this venture, you go down this venture, and it doesn't work out. And you wonder, okay Lord, how, how will it work? How will it go? The odds seem against you, and you say, "Lord I want to trust you, but my goodness, when I look at the circumstances, the odds are against...oh you gave me kids." You prayed for kids, and the Lord granted you kids. And you brought them in the way of the Lord, you brought them up in the way of the Lord as best as you possibly could. And then they get to college, and then they begin to wander away from the faith. And the more you prayed, the further they wandered. The more you prayed, the further they wander from Christ. And you wonder, Lord, will they ever come back? And the things that they're saying, oh my. And it seems like the odds are against, the odds are against you. See, the odds, in Abram's eyes, they were against. I'm 85, my wife 84. We're old. And then the Lord says, "Ahh, that guy, Eliezer, he's not going to be your heir. No, a son from your own body. Your own flesh and blood. Hey, come come come come come, Abe, come come come. Look at the sky. Can you count the stars? Uh, can you count them? Yeah, your descendants will be as many as the stars in the sky. That's the number of the descendants that I'll give you, Abraham. Don't you worry, I've got this."

It's the same way that when God looks at you and he sees, oh yeah, there's all these odds, all these odds, God will say to you what? He will remind you the words of Jesus in Matthew 6. Jesus says, "Hey, look at the birds of the air. These birds don't have any barns. They don't plant any crops. Who feeds them?" Who feeds them? God feeds them, does he not? God is the one who feeds all the birds. Do you ever see the birds of the air starving? Do you see them all sickly and fallen, no. Who feeds them? God feeds them. Every single one of them. The lilies of the fields, the flowers. They're so beautiful. Who makes them beautiful? God does. And yet in Matthew 6 Jesus says, "Yeah, you are more valuable than these." You're more valuable than the birds, you're more valuable than the flowers, the grass of the field. Way more valuable. Not only that, in Hebrews 13:5, the author of Hebrews says, "Hey, God said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you. So think about it in this way. The struggle you're facing right now, the challenge, the mountain, the difficulty you're facing, God said I will never leave you nor forsake you. While you're in it.'" Then you may say, "Oh, but I don't feel God close to me." Yes, your inability to sense the closeness of God in your life is not his problem, it's yours and mine. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." He never left. He never left.

And the Bible continues to affirm, Christ will come back again. This is what the angel told the disciples in Acts 1, when Jesus ascended into glory, the apostles are looking at each other, the disciples of Jesus are looking, and they see this strange guy, and this angel says, "Hey, you know what, this Christ who went up, yeah, the same way he'll come down again. He'll come back again." He'll come back again. Revelation 19 we see a picture of how the Messiah will come back on a white horse. Conquering king. And Jesus is coming back again. The question then is this, do you believe? Do you believe? Do you believe in this Christ? In the midst of your uncertainty, in the midst of your struggle and challenge, do you believe that he never left you? He never forsook you. He's always there with



you. Do you believe that you're more valuable to him than the birds that he feeds? Do you believe in the midst of uncertainty? See, Genesis 15, our passage, Genesis 15:6,

“Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

He believed God. Credited to him as righteousness. Let me give you an example, an illustration. One more story about Jeff, my dear friend. So we were seated in a pastors' meeting. So, because I'm a cool guy, Jeff loves to sit next to me. So he comes and he brings his wonderful self and places himself right beside me. My phone on the desk. So the meeting, we're just buys chit chatting about how terrible his team is and all that, and then my phone lights up. It's a call from Africa. And he sees. So I pick up this phone and I walk out, for about two minutes I have this conversation. I walk back into the meeting, the meeting has just begun, I walk back and Jeff sees my face a little long. “Hey Ez, what's going on?”

“Oh just stuff from Africa.”

“What's going on?”

“Don't worry, I'll take care of it.”

So the meeting goes on, but Jeff still has his eye on me, and he realizes that I'm not okay. Because I was a little distracted. Now one of the things you need to know, background story, one of the things you need to know is, a lot of immigrants, like myself, from Africa, our parents don't have a retirement program. 90 percent of them, they don't. The retirement program for parents in Africa is their children. So we don't send our families to a care home or an old folks' home, no, the children- the burden of caring for parents in their old age falls on the children. So many Africans who come here, and even those who are working in Africa, we keep sending funds to take care of our families. This is something we do. Something we do, it's just part of our culture, and yeah, we do it. No big deal, right? So this particular month, I had sent what I usually send to my folks to take care of them, but then there was this pressing need, an emergency. Life happens, different needs, whatever. So there's this big need that came up that needed immediate attention. But it kind of caught me at an off month, you know when you need to do your oil change and the car is making this funny noise and its six hundred dollars for repair, and you're trying to ask, hey which mechanic can do it for cheaper, and all these things, right? And there were so many financial pressures that particular month, you know, it's kind of like, oh man, do I go to a line of credit, I don't want to do that, do I do this? I've got to talk to my wife, figure this out, whatever. And so Jeff is seeing all this turmoil in me, and so he comes, “Hey Ez, what's going on, what's going on, what's going on?” Jeff is a little nosy, okay? So, nosy Jeff pushes me and then I tell him, “Oh yeah, this is the problem, my mom wants this, and this issue, blah blah blah, it will cost this much, got to figure it out and all that, but it's okay, God is good.” And then he says, “Wait a minute.” And so he takes his phone, “Hey Jeanne,” calls his wife, and then he talks to her, walking away, and then he comes back, says, “Hey Ez, yeah don't worry about it, we've got it.”

“We've got what?”

“Yeah, we'll take care of this need.”

“You'll what? No you're not.”

“Yes, we're going to take care of it.” And so we argue, “No you're not, I didn't ask for your help Jeff,



what's your problem? Like why are you just butting into my life, wanting to fix everything? No no no."

[Laughter]

"Ezra, don't worry about it, do you have the money?"

"No, I don't have the money."

"Okay, so I've got the money, don't worry about it. I'll take care of it."

So we went back and forth, but at the end of the day, man, I just thought, wow, thank you Lord for providing for my brother. The point of that story is this. The moment Jeff said, "Ezra, I will help," the anxiety and the heaviness that I was feeling left. Why? Because my friend, who hadn't written a cheque yet, he hadn't given me a dollar yet. My friend, who abuses me constantly. [Laughter] My friend, Jeff, whom I know, whom I travel with constantly, my friend said to me, "Ezra, I've got this. Don't worry." My friend Jeff said, "I've got this, don't worry." He ain't perfect. He supports an awful team. But he said, "Ezra, don't worry. I've got this." But then, life happens too, right? And Ezra has other problems that come up, and God constantly says, "Ezra, I will never leave you nor forsake you." But Ezra's still anxious. Why? Why? Yet, God has seen me through highs, the lows, the in between, he has redeemed me, he's saved me from many situations. Forgiven my sins on many occasions. Seen me through many things. And you. Why is it that when a friend tells you, "Hey, don't worry about it," we are like, "Ahh." But when God says it, we aren't? What does it say about our faith in God? And yet God is way more faithful than Jeff. God is way more consistent than Jeff.

You see, sometimes we linger in worry and unbelief. In Matthew 6, the Bible says, Jesus, before he gave the Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:8, "Your Father in heaven knows your needs before you ask." He knows your needs before you ask them. He already knows. Same chapter, a few verses later, Matthew 6:32, "Your father in heaven knows you need these things." What things? "Do not worry about what you'll eat, what you drink, what you'll wear, your father in heaven knows you need these things. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you as well." Matthew 6:33. So, your father knows. He can be trusted. He can be trusted. He can be trusted. Promise renewed.

[Promise Ratified]

Second, a promise ratified, very quickly here, Genesis 15:8-19

"But Abram said, 'Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?' So the LORD said to him, 'Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.' Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the LORD said to him, [pay attention to what the Lord says here] 'Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.'"



Let me just pause there. What is God talking about there? Yeah, the Exodus, Egypt. Remember?
Genesis 15:15,

“‘You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.’ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.’”

“The land of these people I’ll give to you,” is what the Lord says. Interesting. The Lord is promising land, but this land already has people in it. The people that are mentioned in verse 19, the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites. The Mennonites weren’t there yet. [Laughter] Like, all this land had people in it already. The land had people in it already, and God said, “Yeah, I will give this land.” So Abraham is looking at all these things, “Yes Lord, I believe, I believe you can do this. I believe you can totally make this happen. Okay but Lord, show me how.” It’s kind of like, you know, when you’re watching movies like *Mission Impossible*, where the mission is impossible. And then you have this technician who kind of, like shows you, okay, this is how it’s going to work out. So for Abram, he’s kind of like, “Man, Lord, this is, yeah, totally you’re awesome, you’re God, I believe in you, but show me.” And so God says, “Hey, bring all these animals, yeah, bring these animals. Okay let’s slaughter them,” we slaughter them, “Okay now, put the halves, one half on one side, one half on the other side, opposite each other.”

So in the ancient world, when you were signing a contract, there were two kinds of covenants, or two kinds of contracts you would sign. One would be a bilateral contract, a bilateral covenant. This means two people who are just equals, so Jeff and I, we’re equals, right? So, I want this included in the contract and he wants this included in the contract, so we go back and forth and negotiate, whatever. We find a common ground, and then we all agree, okay, great. That’s a bilateral, we agreed. A unilateral contract is when you have someone who is greater than you, a king, who is now making a contract with you, a commoner. The king is the one who sets the terms, and you, commoner, just say, “Yes, yes, yes.” The king is the one who has the power to make this work. So you’re the commoner that’s just going to, “Yes, yes.” So this is what’s happening here. Where God, the king, is telling Abraham, “Guess what? I’m going to give you all this land, and I’m going to give you all the descendants, right? Who’s going to give it to you? I am.” Abraham’s like, “Okay Lord, how?” God says, “Let’s sign a contract. Bring all these animals.” So, every time you sign a contract, you have these animals, you slaughter them, you put them half on each side, and if it was a bilateral, both of you would walk in between the animals to say this: to symbolize, if one of us reneges on this contract, may the other do to me as we’ve done to these animals. Slaughter me. Kill me. That’s what it means. In the unilateral covenant, only one person walks, the one with the power. The king is the one who walks. And the king is telling the little guy, “Hey, guess what? If I renege on this, you can do to me as we’ve done to these animals.” As if you would do that to God. In other words, the contract is not necessarily



for God, but the contract is for Abraham. So that Abraham's faith can be secure, that God will do what he has said he will do.

So once they've already slaughtered the animals and all that, God begins to give the terms of the contract. What are the terms? This dreadful darkness that comes over Abraham, he's asleep there, and God begins to say, "Hey, your people, your ancestors will be slaves in a country not their own. But I will deliver them four hundred years later. And I will punish this nation. And they will come back here, and they will take the land, that's how it's going to happen. In other words, God was prophesying about the nation of Israel going to Egypt. Joseph comes in, Egypt, remember the story of Joseph? Coat of many colours, comes to Egypt, sold into slavery and then he ascends becomes the second most powerful person, the story of the Exodus, what God does for Egypt. All this, God is prophesying to Abraham, this is how it's going to play out. And then after that, God decides, okay, this fiery pot with the smoking torch, with the blazing torch, comes through. This is God now walking through the animals. God saying, "Hey, I am the one ratifying this, I will deliver."

Take that image, or have that image behind your mind, and think about it this way. John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he did what? "He sent his only son. That whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." These are words of Jesus. Jesus comes and he gives this word. John 3:16. A few chapters later, John 5:24: "Whoever hears my words," Jesus says, "and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and will not be condemned. He has crossed over from death to life." The words of Jesus. "Whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned. He has crossed over from death to life." Those are the terms of the contract. And how does Christ ratify the contract? How does he seal the deal? He dies on a cross. But he doesn't remain dead. He rises again on the third day. And then there is an affirmation that he will come back again to make all things new.

So think of it this way. We know the story of Abraham. Did God deliver on all his promises? Did he deliver? Of course he delivered. We know the story. You know the genealogies you see in the biblical text, when you're reading the Bible through and in January you say, "Oh, I'm going to read the Bible through in a year." And so you begin to read and you come to the genealogies and you're kind of like, "Oh man, this is such a yawner, such a boring genealogy." Yeah, these genealogies are there to show that God is true to his word to Abraham. God is true to his word. He is true to his word. So we know that God delivers on what he says, he delivers. So, he said, "I will come back again and make all things new." Jesus is coming back again.

So here, when I was going to be a dad for the first time, when I was being a dad for the first time, man, I was so excited, oh I'm going to be a dad, I'm going to be a dad. Everywhere I went, "I'm going to be a dad." I was scared of seeing my wife's belly go, oh my, it's big, but I was so excited, "I'm going to be a dad," everywhere I went, "I'm going to be a dad." I wasn't thinking about a big screen TV, 4K, you know, Telus with your Fiber Optik coming, now I wasn't thinking about any of those things. Why? I was thinking about, how am I going to save, how am I going to be a good dad, is my home safe, is my car clean, should I get a van, I was thinking about all these things preparing for my kid. And if you came to my house, we would talk about the Canucks, yeah we would talk about all this stuff, yeah, but we



would taking about the coming of my firstborn child. Jesus is coming back again. Guaranteed. What are you talking about? What are you all talking about? Jesus is coming back again. What are you talking about? You see, if you are struggling here today, and if life is really hard for you, the return of Christ should give you tremendous hope, that your suffering is not going to last forever. He will come and make all things new. If you don't have any justice and you feel you've been unfairly treated, guess what? He will bring true justice for you. You should be rejoicing. But if you're here and everything is going okay and life is good, praise God! But nonetheless, what are you doing with your time, money and talent? Are you working for, are you preparing for the coming of your Lord? Are you cleaning your house and cleaning your life and reorganizing your priorities to reflect that you are truly waiting for the coming of the Messiah? Oh may the Lord help us be ready. May the Lord help us to be ready for his imminent return. Let's pray,

Father, for your grace and your goodness we are truly thankful. Father, for the promises you give us constantly Lord, we pray Lord, continue to renew these promises. Through your word, Father, the things you say to us, renew them to us, Father. Help us to remember that you ratify those promises through the death and resurrection of Christ. Help us to hang our hats on them, to put our hopes in that. We commit ourselves, Father, to you. In the name of your Son we pray, and God's people, said, Amen.