



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

March 24/25, 2018 - Greg Harris

What About Abe - (Romans 4)

**[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.]**

Romans 4:1-25,

“What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’

Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

‘Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.’

Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’ He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.



Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why ‘it was credited to him as righteousness.’ The words ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks Krystal. As Krystal said you probably noticed when you came in, we have banners up that say, Abe and sermon slides it says, Abe, and on your bulletin it says, Abe. And then Krystal comes up and reads a long passage, Romans 4. So you might be thinking, “What’s the deal, what’s going on here, why are we, I thought we were doing a biography of Abraham and now we are over here in the book of Romans.” Well it’s a bit of a crossover weekend. I don’t know if you have seen those crossover movies, there’s one coming out in a few months, put out by Marvel, which is like a comic book company... Ironman and Thor and all of that kind of stuff, Batman or something, it’s not, I know he’s not Marvel. But the crossover, the idea is that all these different super heros in the Marvel world are going to come together in a big crossover movie, and they’re all going to fight the enemy and it’s going to be amazing. “It’s going to be the biggest crossover event in history,” they say. Which I don’t think it’s possible because the Jetsons already met the Flintstones. [Laughter] So they had to travel through time to the stone age, it was a bigger deal. But that’s the idea right? It’s this idea of two things that exist that are coming together into one time frame and so what we are trying to do here this weekend is as a church we’ve been going through the book of Romans in the Fall. So two Fall’s ago we did Romans 1-3, then this previous Fall we did Romans 5-8. And if you are keeping score at home, you are like, “You missed 4, you didn’t want to do 4, you are nervous about 4? Are you too scared to do 4?” No! We actually decided, we knew we were going to do life of Abraham, so we decided to put Romans 4 at the end of this biography because it really is how the New Testament view’s, what’s the deal about Abe? How do we understand Abe in light of how Paul talks about salvation. So Romans 4 is essentially a sermon illustration that Paul uses to defend his main point that he had made just a few verses earlier. So here’s Paul’s point that he made in Romans 3:28-30. It says,

“For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith [so the Jews] and the uncircumcised through that same faith [the Gentiles].”



## [Salvation]

Here's Paul's argument in Romans 3:28-30. His big argument is that salvation is through faith, for all who believe. It's his big idea, that he's teaching to the Romans in this point in the letter that salvation is through faith for all who believe. And the question that the Jew's in Rome had at that point was, "Well how do we make sense of the story of Abraham? What about Abe?" So he engages in Romans 4 to try and make the case that Abraham's story lines up with this exact thesis. That salvation is through faith for all who believe. So what we are going to do this morning is we are just going to look at that big idea and we are going to break it up into three parts. We are going to look at salvation, how it's talked about in Romans 4, we are going to look at how salvation is through faith and finally how salvation is for all who believe. So first let's look at salvation, what Romans 4 says about this. Romans 4:1,

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter?"

If salvation is by faith for all who believe, what about Abe? What does his life story say about that? Romans 4:2-3,

"If in fact Abraham, was justified by works, he had something to boast about. But not before God. What does Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.'"

So in order for us to understand the salvation that Paul is talking about we are going to have to unpack a few of these words. Namely the idea of crediting righteousness. What does that phrase, crediting righteousness, trying to convey. How do we understand it. So righteousness is this idea of not only right actions, but right actions that lead to a right standing. So imagine with me you work at a frozen yogurt stand with a colleague. It's you and this colleague who work and you have a manager. Your colleague doesn't like you, which is crazy because you are lovely, delightful. But your colleague doesn't like you. And so one day at the froyo stand your colleague decides they want to take you down. And so they make up a story to your manager saying, "Look whenever we work together, this person eats all the froyo, they're froyo thief. So the manager says, "Okay, well until we get this sorted out, we are going to have to suspend you from your roll so you're no longer in right standing as an employee, you are going to go off to the side, we are going to watch the video together, make some popcorn, watch and see if you are actually are this froyo thief." You watch the video and you realize actually your actions were not wrong, you had the right actions and because your actions were proper, you weren't a thief, your manager comes to you and says, "Okay I'm going to reinstate you in proper standing at the froyo stand. Right? Righteousness isn't just this idea of right actions, it's right actions that lead to right standing with someone or something. Which in this case right standing with God. So salvation is this idea of having right standing with God. Now the issue or the question is, how does one get that right standing with God? Well that's where the word credited comes in. How do we understand that the righteousness is *credited* to someone? See in our context, in our culture, when we say, "I got to give someone credit." We mean that we are just describing or articulating something that



is true about someone else. So if I'm up here and I say, "I got to give Pastor Jonathan credit who's the redhead worship leader, dances around a lot." If I say, "I have to give Jonathan credit, he did a really good job this weekend," what I'm saying is I'm articulating something that is true about Jonathan in himself. I'm giving him the credit that he deserves. But in the ancient world this word credit, it's actually used in this passage 11 times. In this context credit isn't given something to someone that they inherently deserve it's giving something to someone even if they don't deserve it themselves. So this idea of crediting righteousness to Abraham because of his faith is this idea of him being given right standing with God even though it wasn't inherently his doing that earned that earned his righteousness. It's not because he was great, it's because he had faith that righteousness was credited to him, it was given to him. It's the similar idea if you've been in church for a while or if you've heard that word in this passage of justification. So justification essentially is, it's the declaring over someone that they are righteous, not because of what they've done, but because through faith they have been credited as righteous. So for understanding salvation, if we're trying to understand that big idea that salvation is through faith for all who believe, a necessary part of understanding salvation is this idea that salvation includes a right standing with God that's been given to you. But it's not only that, Romans 4:23-25, when Paul is trying to apply this passage to the Romans, he's trying to apply Genesis 15:6 where he's quoting that Abraham had faith and it was credited to him as righteousness. When Paul applies that to the Roman context here's how he does so. Romans 4:23 says,

"The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

### **[Salvation is through Faith]**

So if we're going to understand salvation properly we also need to recognize that part of salvation is this idea of having our sins being taken care of, being forgiven because Jesus was delivered over for them. Which is a really great idea to think about especially on Palm Sunday.

Palm Sunday is the weekend in the church where we celebrate, where we remember the historic scene of Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey. And we look at that scene and we think, "Man entering on a donkey, that's kind of less than ideal." But actually it wasn't totally an uncommon or a crazy thing to have happen because in the ancient world for centuries, kings would come in on donkeys. It wasn't the only way kings could come in, but it was a primary way that kings would come in as a victor as a the one who is triumphant. They could come in on a donkey, that's why when people see Jesus coming in on a donkey. They are not like, "That's a weird animal choice." They are saying, "He's the king, He's the one who's going to deliver us." And by that what the Jews meant, was Jesus was going to come and they thought their Messiah was going to deliver them from their felt need, the oppressors, called Rome. That Jesus would come in as the king to deliver, and the turn in the story, the beautiful turn in the story is that Jesus did come to be a king to deliver but the way Jesus came to deliver was he came the way in which he was going to deliver his people was being delivered up himself on a cross. He delivered others by being delivered up himself and the enemy he took down wasn't merely the felt need of the oppressor Rome, he took down the greatest enemy which is sin itself. That through



this king who came in triumphantly he is heading straight to the cross where he will deliver up himself so he can deliver up his people from their sins. See part of understanding salvation and what Paul is talking about in salvation is this necessary idea that we have sins that need to be forgiven and Jesus is the Savior who forgives us of these sins. He earns us our right standing, that right standing with God that's given to us and He takes care of our sins by dying on the cross for us in our place. That's the message of salvation for Christianity. It's good news.

My suspicion is that for a lot of us here this weekend we've heard that news before, we've actually kind of grown accustomed to it. It's not *shocking* anymore, we are sitting here thinking to ourselves, "Is this all we are going to get this weekend? Because I've heard this one before, like I've heard that news of how we need our sins forgiven and how we need right standing with God. I've heard this one, I've grown accustomed to this story." See maybe you're one of these people who you've grown up in the church for a really long time and you know you're in the small group setting and everyone needs to tell their testimony, and someone before you just told for like decades long they were this awful person, did all these awful things and then they came to Christ and faith and now their life has been totally transformed and you're thinking to yourself how you can make yourself sound worse at 3 ½ than at 4, cause that's when the transition happened for you, right? Cause for you, every Sunday has been this continual week in, week out, coming to church all the time, hearing the same kind of thing, that Jesus died for our sins and He was raised for our justification. And justification means right standing with God and we think, "Oh I've grown accustomed to this grace." It breeds this kind of lethargic indifference to the story... true story.

Now I don't know if you've seen the movie or the play, *My Fair Lady*. It had a big run in the '50's on Broadway then they made a movie in the 60's with Audrey Hepburn. It's the story basically of a lady named, Eliza Doolittle, who sold flowers on the street but her speech was awful. And no one treated her like a lady because her speech was just brutal. So what does she do, well she gets sent to this phonetics professor, this guy whose job is to help people speak good. His name is Henry Higgins and when Higgins first meets Eliza Doolittle he's like, "She's the worst, the worst student I've ever had in my life." But as the story progresses you see his walls break down over time and eventually near the end of the movie, he sings a song about how he's grown *accustomed* to her face. That at first he despised her, but as the story went on his affections started to grow for her. And yet I think for many of us who our testimony is coming to the Lord early in life in growing up in the church. I think for us growing *accustomed* to God's grace doesn't lead to a growing in affection, sometimes it leads to our affection waning and us looking for something better or further.

We're like, when my friend Rob from college, he came from Saskatchewan to move to BC and he came here and everywhere we went together he was like, "There's a mountain, right there, mountain." I'm like, "I know."

"Okay look over there, there's a mountain right there. What's that one? That's a good mountain."

"I know, I know, I know."

"Greg, what, WOAHH, what's that mountain called?"

"That's Baker."

"Baker's crazy!" I'm like, "I know, sure, it's great." I mean I grew up here, so I'm kind of indifferent to the mountains. Sure they're majestic, I guess. [Laughter]



I think this is the way we are with the gospel. We are familiar with it, sure it's majestic ... I guess, sure it's glorious... I guess. We've grown out of that toddler fixation on the amazing, right? You've seen toddler's who can do the same thing over and over again. This is my son right now with sinks. Alright he goes to the tap, he steps on his little stool, he pulls up the lever on the tap and water comes *flowing* out and he's like, "This is *amazing!*" And then if you press the little thing at the bottom of the sink did you know that the sink fills up? So you can play in the water that's coming from the spout, and then when Dad presses the lever, all the water drains out and we don't flood the house, it's *incredible*. My son as a toddler is completely captivated he's *fixated* on the beauty of the familiar. I think when it comes to us as Christians, we should be more like a toddler who's captivated by the beauty of the familiar rather than the indifferent lethargic person who says, "Yeah, I guess it's majestic."

But why is it that we respond with indifference to this news. Why we think to ourselves, "Man I wish this would be about more than just like, justification, and like right standing with God and forgiveness of sins. It would be nice if this was about something else right?" I think one of the reasons why we think that because we don't actually see how desperate our situation really is. We hear a story like Sodom and Gomorrah, which was preached a few weekends ago, of God coming to a city which is desperately wicked, it's the most wicked city you could ever imagine and we look at what the scene that happens where the angels come in and they are going to destroy the city, but they're going to rescue Lot, the nephew of Abraham first. And they are going to drag Lot out kicking and screaming before they bring the judgement on the men of Sodom, these men of Sodom who wanted to do the most horrific things to these angels and we look at that scene and we are like, "*Ugh* the men of Sodom they're disgusting. That kind of sin that they do is just is just *awful*. How could they... of course God's going to judge them. He's not going to judge me I just gossip, and when I gossip it's mostly in the form of a prayer request, so it's different, right? I'm not like *Sodom*, *ugh*, them! God's going to judge *them*, but for me, man I'm, I don't really deserve that much judgement, I'm not that bad." But the reality of the scriptures is that the road *wide* which leads to destruction, the sins are many, that get you on there... there is no super sin that makes you that much more, *ugh*, than any of the other sins. We are all rebels before this God, we don't deserve anything but His wrath, but instead what we're offered is *salvation*, a forgiveness of our sins in the right standing with God that we don't deserve what is given to us! That's the news we're offered. I think if we realized how desperate we were when we hear that news our heart would soar, rather than say, "Eh, I guess it's majestic." It's a majestic gospel, this salvation that's being offered to us. This news which is available and the salvation is available through faith. Romans 3:28 says,

"For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."

So that's his point. Now here's how Paul's going to go into the life of Abraham to show how this is true of Abe. So Romans 4:1-5,

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? [How is this idea that salvation is through faith true of Abraham?] If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Now to



the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.”

And none of us gasp. Because we're 21st century, mostly Gentile people. If you were a first century Jewish person you would have gasped at this part of Paul's letter. Here's why, in between when the Old Testament was written and the New Testament was written, there was about a 400 year gap where God was essentially radio silent with his people. There was no prophet speaking there was no words coming from the Lord. There was 400 years of time when God was not speaking to his people, we call it the intertestamental time because it's between the Old and New Testaments. But that doesn't mean that the Jews weren't still writing theology books, they still were. And in this intertestamental time there was a viewpoint about Abraham that developed that actually doesn't really look like Genesis 15 where it says that Abraham, “believed and it was credited to him as righteousness.” The theology that developed in the intertestamental period was essentially that Abraham was a perfect keeper of the law. That the reason why Abraham was chosen by God was because he was perfect in his works. One theology book written in this time called, 1 Maccabees 2:52 , says it this way. “Was not Abraham found faithful when tested,” so when he found a testing, Abraham was faithful, “And it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” You here the line of argument there, here's a test Abraham. If you're faithful, then I'll reckon righteousness to you, I'll credit righteousness to you if you are obedient. If you're faithful in that test. And Abraham was faithful in the test and so it was credited to him as righteousness. And then Paul comes along and says, “That's not what the Bible says, the Bible says the opposite, the Bible says that it was by *faith* that Abraham was credited righteousness before he even did anything, even before he went and was circumcised which happened decades later. Before all of his obedience to God there was his faith in a God who would keep his promises. *That's* how Abraham was credited as righteous, completely countercultural to how many of the Jews would have understood the story of Abraham. And the default setting of our hearts as human beings is very similar to those first century Jews, right?

Most of us think that the way that we get the good in the end is by being good in the now. That if I do the works, if I do the stuff, then I'm going to get the good at the end of the day. Different religions will have different viewpoints on what is the good at the end of the day, but all other religious viewpoints, all other worldviews basically argue that it's through your good works that get you to that end goal, whatever that end goal is. So in Hinduism the end goal of life, the thing that you'd want more than anything else is to cease to exist. Because when you exist there's suffering, and there's pain and there's grief and there's mourning and if you could be removed from all of that difficulty, wouldn't that be fantastic. So the goal is to cease to exist, to have your life basically be like a mist in the air that eventually just dissipates and becomes nothing and you get merged into the nothingness of the universe. The way in which you get there is through doing the right things, in particular in the certain area of life that you are, or the caste system that you are apart of, the caste level that you are in. If you do the right things in your group of people then the next life when you reincarnate, you'll have another opportunity to do more good things, and if you eventually over the cycle of many lifetimes of reincarnations, live a good enough life, you will achieve the goal of removal of everything that is



difficult, of ceasing to exist. But the way you get that goal is through doing the good works now. It's the default setting of the human heart, is to say, the way we get the good is by doing the good now.

Sikhism is very similar to Hinduism, the only difference is that instead of merging into the nothingness, you become amalgamated into the one true God. Sikhism is a monotheistic religion, they believe there is one god, and that at the end of your life after a few reincarnations, after living good enough in your different life stages, eventually the goal is to no longer be an individual, but to become amalgamated into the Waheguru, the one true god that is out there. And the way you get there is by doing all the good works here and now. See this is the default setting of the human heart is that you get the good later by doing the good now. This is the same as the Mr. Rogersism of our North American life. Right? There's some God out there, most people think there's some kind of God and the way you are probably going to get to heaven is by doing more good things than bad things, so just be nice to people. Make sure that on your table there's more stacks of good works than bad works. Cause eventually the scales will just tip, if there's more good than bad then you'll get to be with God, if you want, I guess. See the default setting of the human heart is that the way we get good later is by doing the good now and yet the scandal of Christianity is the way you get the promise of eternal life and of hope and of right standing with God for an eternity and to be fully human and flourishing in all that it was intended to be is not by your works. It's fundamentally based on your faith in the God who promises these things to you.

### **[Salvation is for All Who Will Believe]**

So when we look at the story of Abraham, as Christians today we don't just look at the story of Abraham and say, "Oh Abraham had faith and he *activated* his faith and he got all this good stuff now." And now we look at the story of Abraham and say that's the way we interpret it right? We look at Abraham's life and look at all the good things that came to him because he had a faith that was strong enough, like he had enough faith juice to actually get all the good stuff. No, the way we should understand Abraham's story is the way Scripture understands it. Scripture interprets Scripture. Here's how Scripture provides an understanding of the life of Abraham, that the way God saved Abraham is the way God saves every single person, through their faith, and what God can accomplish for him. See salvation is *through* faith, and it's through faith for all who will believe. So back to Romans 3:28-30, where Paul makes his point. Paul says,

"For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith."

In the first century there is two kinds of people, that Paul's writing to, there's Jewish people, there's everybody else. Jews and Gentiles, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, and here's Paul's scandalous argument, that salvation is equally available to all kinds of people. That in God's perspective of the world, there is no us's and them's. There are no, us, who are worthy of salvation and those people, who aren't. God is the God of the Jews and also the Gentiles. He is the God of the circumcised and also the uncircumcised. This is why in Romans 4:16 it says,



“Therefore [Talking about Abraham’s life], the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring [well who gets to count as Abraham’s offspring]—not only to those who are of the law [the Jews] but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.”

This message of salvation is available not only for the people through whom God moved in history, there is not a doubt that the reason God chose Abraham to create a people for himself was so that He could work over time and demonstrating who He is to reveal who God is and to eventually have that culminating point of Jesus Christ of Nazareth coming through the family line of Abraham and coming to be the Saviour who offers this right standing with God and forgiveness of sins. God wanted to use a family, he wanted to use a people, but this salvation that’s available because of this work of the son of Abraham, Jesus Christ, is for all peoples. There is no us, who deserve it, and those who don’t. If you have faith, then you’re a child of Abraham and not only that, you’re a child of God.

I was talking to a friend of mine who, he’s adopted three kids and he has two kids biologically. I asked him, “How do you handle that dynamic, how do you talk to your kids about the fact that two of them are biological kids and three of them are adopted.” And he said to me, “Well it’s not very hard because what I tell them is that they’re all equally my kids. They are all rightful heirs to everything that I have. I’m the father of all of them equally. It’s not like there’s the us and the those, it’s us.” The way they got in his family is that, he decided to have them as a part of their family. See this is the image of entering into the family of God, that the way you get in to the family of God is through faith. Which is why we say things like, whosoever will believe the gospel will be saved, is because it’s for all kinds of people. I have a sense that it’s tempting for us to walk through life thinking that there are the us’s, where it’s realistic and it makes sense that we’re saved, and there’s the them, that it doesn’t seem like it’s very realistic for people like them to be saved. And we all have different them, right? For some of us the them is the family member who’s antagonistic, hostile, atheist to God, they don’t think God exists and if He does exist, he hates Him. And every time we try to have a conversation with your family member about God it just blows up the family dinner. It gets hostile, it gets awkward, it gets terrible, you don’t know how to have the conversations because they’ve studied different things than you have and you think to yourself when you are driving home from your family dinner, “They will never come to saving faith. It *can’t* happen, for *us* it happened, but for *them*, I don’t know. It can’t happen.” Or maybe for us the them aren’t someone in our own family, maybe it’s someone in our own neighbourhood. And we think to ourselves, “Man they have their completely different culture, their completely different language, they are never going to be able to come to saving faith because no one’s going to be able to speak their language and talk to them about it.” So salvation’s for us, but probably not for them.

One of the scandals of the gospel that there is no us and them. Every single person who comes to saving faith in Jesus is a miracle. It’s not because they deserved it, it’s because God did a miraculous work in their life. Salvation is available for *all kinds* of people. If we grasped that news then we would take seriously the commission to be talking about the gospel with people and to be praying for people, because we know that salvation is through faith for everyone who’s going to believe. So we’re motivated by the fact that this grand salvation is available for anyone who has faith in Jesus. So maybe you have a hard time talking about the gospel with people, or maybe you don’t speak the same language as them, or maybe they are hostile in your conversations and you think how’s it ever going to



happen. Well don't give up praying for that person. God has chosen to use the prayers of people to save His people. If we won't pray, people won't be saved. If we don't preach, people won't be saved. So we should pray and we should preach. You can't speak the language of your neighbour, you can pray for them on your own. You can plead with God that He would do a miracle in their life just like He did in your life. Because you know that you're no better off than anyone else. You *are* the man of Sodom, *I am* the man of Sodom who deserves to be judged for my wickedness, and yet God offers so sweet a salvation, through faith, for anyone who would believe.

See I think as Abbotsfordians, if you're from Abbotsford, you need to think about this. Cause I think we bought into this myth that we live in the Bible belt. So we drive around and we see churches all over the place and we think, "Ah we're good man, you kidding, look at all those churches. We don't need to worry about it here." But we need to take a good long hard look at the fact that as Abbotsford is growing exponentially in our population base, people attending churches is *dramatically* decreasing. The only way people are going to hear about the good news of Jesus is if someone actually speaks to them about it. Abbotsford's not a conquered territory, there are hundreds of thousands of people who do not profess Christ, and without their faith they have no hope other than the same fate of Sodom.

But the good news is the story of Abraham is the story of every single person who is going to be saved. That it's not based on what we can do it's based on are faith in the one who has won our salvation for us. That's the big deal about Abe. He's the first believer, he's the father of the Jews whom through God worked to bring Jesus and he's the father of every single person who will respond to the invitation of God's promises. And Abraham responded to what he thought God could do and now we have the opportunity to respond to what we have heard God has done. What He's done in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who offers salvation to all who will believe if they'll have the faith.

Let me pray for us. Father I'm grateful for your word, I'm grateful for the way that it shows us who you are and how you want to win a people for yourself. Father I pray that you'd overwhelm us with the fact that we don't deserve salvation, so that we can be overwhelmed with the fact that we have so great a salvation. I'd pray that'd motivate us to pray for and speak to people about this hope that's available if they'll have faith in this Jesus who died for them, who is risen from the grave for them. Father I pray that many people over the course of the next few weeks and months and years would come to saving faith because of the things that we say and the prayers that we pray. It's all for your glory that we pray, in Jesus name, Amen.