

Christ Our Great High Priest

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[0 : 00] Great. Thank you, Christina. Great. Good morning, everybody. Welcome. Welcome to you. If you're a guest of ours or visiting, it's wonderful to have you with us.

Let's pray together as we consider this very interesting and challenging passage. Fathers, we come to your word this morning. We want to meet with you.

We want to know more about you. We want to understand your ways. God, we want to understand your nature and your character. But we don't just want to learn about you. We want to meet with you.

We want to, God, be confronted by your holiness and your grace, your righteousness and your mercy. And so, God, we pray, come and speak to us from your word.

God, I pray that you'll protect me from saying anything that is not of you. Anything that I say that is not of you may fall on deaf ears. God, we want to hear from you this morning. And so, we bring just the rest of our service before you and ask you, God, be glorified in our hearts and in our sight as we consider your word.

[1 : 05] We pray these things in your wonderful name. Amen. This morning, we are starting a six-week series called Christ in the Old Testament. And the reason we're doing this is that many people, both followers of Jesus and spiritual seekers, we have this idea that the Bible is in two distinct parts, right?

The Old Testament is bad news. New Testament is good news. Or maybe the Old Testament God is angry. And in the New Testament, there's a different God. And he's merciful and gracious and kind and forgiving.

And yet, that's not true. The Bible is one story of the glory of God, the God who made all things. It's the story of the fallenness of humanity, how we've rebelled against God and gone our own way.

And it's the story from beginning to end of how God sought to reconcile his creation back to himself by his own sending himself to die on the cross for us. And so, the Bible from beginning to end, Old Testament through the New Testament is one story, the story of the gospel.

But it's not always easy to see that. Augustine said it like this. He said, the New Testament is hidden in the Old Testament, and the Old Testament is revealed in the New.

[2 : 21] So, it's one story, but sometimes it does feel hidden. It's hard to see that. Sometimes it's like when you read the Old Testament, and you're struggling to find out where's the gospel, where's Jesus Christ in this?

It can be like hiking through a forest, right? Which is why the picture of trees in the back. It's like you're hiking through a dense forest, and you know that there's a path in there somewhere. You know there is a way out, but unless you see the big picture, the map, unless you see where you're going, you can sometimes lose the trees from the forest.

And so, really, this series is designed to help us see the gospel in the entire Bible from beginning to end. To see how even the most obscure and unusual passages of the Old Testament are, in fact, pointing us to Christ and a hope found in Him.

So, we're going to be doing this for the next six weeks. Now, the passage of scripture that we looked at this morning is a very interesting one. I've often read it as a young man and thought to myself, Abraham, what are you doing?

You're very brave to negotiate with God. And yet, God somehow allows him to do it. And then, just when he gets to the crunch time, he walks away. Like, what on earth is going on?

[3 : 31] Well, I've consulted many theologians and commentators this week and have sought help from many people. And just to say, Tim Keller has been very helpful in helping me understand this passage.

Now, the background to the story is this. Genesis chapter 12, a few chapters before. God calls this man called Abraham. He doesn't call him because Abraham is particularly special or righteous or worthy.

Abraham is a pagan. He is worshiping the sun and the moon and the stars. And yet, God calls him to leave his family and his land to go to a new land. And God promises amazing blessings.

He says, through you and your descendants, or more specifically, your descendant, I will bless all the nations of the world. Everyone will be able to come to know who I am through your descendants.

And so, God gives him this amazing promise. And Abraham trusts God. And so, he follows him. He goes, he leaves the land where he came from, and he goes to Canaan and settles there.

[4 : 35] But Abraham has a nephew called Lot. Abraham's brother, Haran, died. And so, Lot is without a father. And so, Abraham says to his nephew, come with me. And so, they travel together. And after a couple of years, they both accumulate more and more wealth and herds and cattles.

And their estates are growing. And eventually, the place where they settle is too small for both families. And so, Abraham says, Lot, you decide which way to go. You go one way, I'll go the other. And so, Lot says, great. I'll go east. And he goes to this valley called the Jordan Valley. And he finds a town there called Sodom. And Lot settles in that town.

And Abraham says, okay, fine, I'll go west. And so, they go their separate ways. But we're told in chapter 13 that Sodom is a very wicked place. The sin there is very great. And the reason for this, the reason why God considers Sodom a very wicked place is twofold.

The one reason is because of the abundant, I guess, promiscuity, sexual promiscuity. Everyone there is living for their own pleasure. They are using and abusing other people to satisfy themselves.

[5 : 42] Relationships are not marked by a commitment and a self-serving, but rather how I can use other people to fulfill my own pleasure. And so, but in addition to that, Sodom is also a place where they are mistreating the poor.

They are mistreating the needy. There's great injustice there. Everyone is just looking out for themselves. In fact, in verse 20, I don't know if you noticed, twice God talks about the outcry in Sodom.

Elsewhere in the Bible, that word outcry is used to talk about the cries of the oppressed. So, there are people in Sodom that are being oppressed by the wealthy and the powerful. And they're crying out to God, where are you?

And so, because of the injustice and the promiscuity and the lack of righteousness in Sodom, God says, things are not well in Sodom. And so, what's happening is the people there, all the relationships, both with God, vertically, I have to think about that for a second, and each other horizontally, things are not going well.

There's a sense of selfishness, self-righteousness, self-entitlement. There's not much that's right or just or moral in these relationships. In other words, there's not much righteousness in the town, the city of Sodom.

[6 : 54] Now, this picture of Sodom doesn't just come out of nowhere. We sometimes think that Sodom was the only bad place in the world and everyone else was right. But actually, as we read the book of Genesis, we read that this is the story of the world.

Remember Genesis chapter, I think it's three or four. Right after the fall, Adam and Eve fall, well, they've got two sons. One is called Cain, the other one is called Abel. And Cain is jealous of his brother.

And so, he waits in the field for him. Abel comes walking along and Cain rises up and attacks his brother and kills him. Right in the beginning, Genesis chapter 4. In Genesis chapter 6, there's such wickedness of the world that God says, I think it's time we just wipe it out and start again.

And so, God picks Noah and says, you're going to be kind of like a new Adam. You're going to start again with you. But Noah himself isn't too much better. And so, straight after the flood, things don't go so well themselves.

And then chapter 11, we've got the story of the Tower of Babel where humanity says, we don't need God. We've got science. We've got technology. We've got our own industriousness. Why do we need God?

[7 : 58] Let's build a tower to the sky. We can manage on our own. Who needs God with everything we've invented? And so, they build this tower. And it actually says in chapter 11, they

say, let us make a temple with its tops in the heavens that we can make a name for ourselves.

And then you get Abraham. And you think in chapter 12, okay, finally we've got someone who's righteous. And then chapter 13, Abraham goes to Egypt with his wife. And he says to his wife, listen, Sarah, you and I both know that you're quite a stunner, right?

Everyone's going to be turning their heads to look at you. So, let's make a deal. When we go to Egypt, let's pretend that you're my sister. Because if everyone knows that you're my wife, maybe they'll attack me so that they can marry you.

And so, Abraham pretty much sells his wife down the river. And so, he goes to Egypt and he says, this is my sister, Sarah. And the Pharaoh says, wow, I would like to have her as my wife.

And so, he gives Abraham a whole lot of gold and money and silver to marry his wife. Even Abraham himself has got some issues. But all this, God still has a purpose for Abraham.

[9 : 02] And that then brings us to our passage today in Genesis chapter 18. Now, I've got three points today. The first one is God calls Abraham. Secondly, Abraham calls on God.

And then thirdly, learning to pray like Abraham, okay? So, firstly, God calls Abraham. Now, this passage that we have today, remember where Abraham kind of wrestles with God in prayer.

It's a famous passage about interceding or praying for a nation or a city on behalf of them. But before we get there, what's interesting is to note who initiates this conversation.

Who starts this dialogue between Abraham and God? Well, look at verse 17. It says this. God says to Abraham, shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?

Now, think about that for a second. In this story, there are three people that have arrived at Abraham's tent. Two of them are angels, and one of them is God himself in human form. And so this man, the Lord, Yahweh, says, shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do?

[10 : 04] But Abraham's standing right next to him. Now, if you ever say to somebody, love, I'm wondering if I should tell you this or not. What have you done? You've really decided that you're going to tell them, right?

You don't say that to someone if you're wondering whether you should tell them. You've really made up your mind. You only say that if you're going to tell them, right? But what you're doing is you're conveying the importance of this. You're saying, this is not just a passing comment.

I want you to really take note of what I'm going to do. So God says to Abraham, should I tell Abraham what I'm about to do? And he says the same thing in verse 20. It says, because of the outcry against Sodom is very great and their sin is grave, I will go down and see whether they have altogether done according to the outcry that has come to me.

So why does God go down? I mean, does God, does he not know what's going on? Does he need Abraham's help? Why does God say, let me go down and see what's going on? What's God doing? He's drawing Abraham into the conversation. He's saying, Abraham, I want to talk with you. I want to engage with you. It's kind of like if I say to my daughters, Sarah, will you help me set the table? Or as last night I created, Sarah, will you help me cook dinner together?

[11 : 13] And when you do that, I don't really need my daughter to help me set the table. If anything, it's going to take longer, right? It's going to get more complicated. They're going to get in the way. And I'm going to have to fix everything that they do anyway. Even though actually Sarah sets the table more than me and our family.

But just pretend I do, okay? But why do I do that? It's because I'm drawing her in. It's because I want to include her in what I'm doing. I want to be with her. I could set the table on my own, but I want her to be with me.

And that's what God's doing here. He's drawing Abraham into the conversation. He's saying, Abraham, I have a plan for you. I've got a purpose for your life. Come and see what I'm going to do. And why does God do this?

Well, he tells us in verse 18. Look at what he says. He says, Shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do? Seeing that I have chosen him to become a great nation, through whom all the nations of the world will be blessed.

For I have chosen him that he may teach his children the ways of the Lord. So for Abraham to become the man that God has called him to be. For Abraham to become this great man through whom him and his descendants, the world will be blessed.

[12 : 16] For Abraham to be the father of Israel and to teach Israel who God is, Abraham himself needs to know who God is. That's what God's drawing him in. He's saying, come and be with me.

I want to reveal to you, Abraham, more of who I am, my nature and my character. You see, what does Abraham need? He needs to know God deeply. He doesn't just need to know God superficially.

He needs to know God deeply. He doesn't just need to know Jesus loves me, this I know, for my Sunday school teacher told me so. He needs to have a profound revelation of the nature and the character of who is this God that has called him and is going to bless the whole world.

And so God reveals it to him. Friends, can I ask you, do you know God deeply? Do you know him profoundly? Do you know the intricacies of the nature and the character of God?

Friends, I hope you know that God has got a calling and a plan and a purpose for your life. You're not an accident. Maybe your parents didn't plan to have you, but God planned for you. If you're a Christian, you got saved not just to become religious.

[13:26] You got saved into a worldwide program to make a difference for the glory of God in our world. If you're a seeker here this morning, God wants you to become a follower of Jesus.

Not that you can become more religious or more moral, but that you can join his worldwide plan for the glory of God. God has a plan and a purpose for your life, just like he did for Abraham.

But for both Christians and seekers of life, you'll never become the person God's called you to be. You'll never fulfill your purpose in life. Until you understand the depth of who God is, until you know God deeply.

Friends, if you're a Christian here this morning, if you know God just superficially, when the storms of life come, and they will come, you'll be confused, you'll be dazed, you'll be rocked at your core.

We have to know who God is and to know him deeply. And that's what God wants for Abraham.

And so God calls him. He calls him. He says, Abraham, I want you to engage with me. For Abraham to become this person, he needs to know both the righteousness of God and the mercy of God.

[14:27] He needs to know what will one day be called the gospel. And so God draws him in to reveal himself to Abraham. Okay? First thing, God calls Abraham. Secondly, Abraham then calls on God.

Now, look at what happens here from verse 22 onwards. Look at this very unusual prayer of Abraham's. It's a prayer in which Abraham is wrestling with God, right?

Remember, he starts off and he says, God, Sodom, I know it's very wicked. I know it's very evil. But if there are 50 people in there, will you save it?

And God says, for 50 people, righteous people, I'll save it. And then Abraham says, pardon me, God. I know I'm dust and ashes. I know I don't have the right to ask you this. But what about 45? And he's wrestling.

He's, I guess, negotiating in some ways with God. Very brave of him. Now, what is Abraham's dilemma? What's he wrestling with in this passage? Well, he knows that God is holy.

[15:27] He knows that God is without blemish. God cannot stand sin and wickedness and evil. In chapter 17, just before God comes to Abraham and he says, I am God. Walk before me and be blameless that I may make my covenant with you.

And Abraham falls on his face before God. So Abraham knows something of the holiness and the righteousness of God. He's seen it. He's not questioning it.

But the question he's asking is, is God also kind? I know that he's righteous. Is he also merciful? I know that he's holy. Is he also gracious?

Can God's righteousness and his mercy coincide together? And so look at what he says. He says, will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?

Suppose there are 50 righteous people in the city. Will you sweep away the whole place and not spare it, even for the sake of the 50 people who are in it? So Abraham's trying to work this out. God, I know you're holy and righteous, but are you also merciful?

[16:27] Now, friends, this is actually something that we have to wrestle with ourselves all the time. Now, if you are a parent here this morning, you know the struggle between, I want to teach my children right and wrong.

I want to teach them righteousness and justice and truth. But I also want to teach them graciousness and forgiveness. I want to train my children the way that they should go, but I don't want to be a strict disciplinarian.

I also want to teach them the joys of forgiveness and mercy and forgiveness in our family. Or if you work in an office and you've got people that report to you, that you oversee a team, you've got

standards, you've got objectives you need to achieve.

But you don't just want to be a strict authoritarian leader. You've also got to exhibit kindness and grace and mercy when people make mistakes. How do we bring these things together? When someone makes a mistake, are you holy and righteous?

Are you merciful? How do we bring these things together? And this is what Abraham is wrestling with. Now in order to understand this, we need to think about something that Abraham understood.

[17:30] Abraham knew something that many people, most people in the history of the world have understood. And many cultures in the world understand. But it's something that as Westerners, if you've been trained or grew up in the West here, it's something that as Westerners like myself, we often struggle with.

And the reason is because we live in what? The most individualistic period in the history of the world, right? And so a lot of Westerners, and I guess young people in Hong Kong today, I'm guessing that, we tend to think it doesn't matter what, oh, this is this thing of corporate responsibility, okay?

We struggle with the idea of corporate responsibility. So many Westerners and young people in Hong Kong today, we tend to think, it doesn't matter what my family's done or my community's done or my clan has done.

I am not responsible for anybody else's actions. Only what I do. My actions and my beliefs and my attitudes and my behaviors. I stand or fall on, I'm accountable for myself and myself only.

What my family does, what my parents do, what my clan does, what my team does, has got nothing to do with me. Okay, does that make sense? That's how many people in the West think.

[18:42] Now that may sound very independent and modern and democratic, but actually most people, even today, but definitely throughout the history of the world, have understood that actually as human beings we are far more complex than that.

We're far more relational and community orientated than that. In other words, throughout the history of the world, we've understood that of course there's something called individual responsibility. Of course I'm responsible for my actions.

But there's a far more balanced understanding of relationships, that actually I'm a community person. And what that means is that my actions do in some ways affect the people with whom I am in solidarity.

And likewise, some of their actions and beliefs and behaviors affect me. I'll give you a couple of examples. I was reading a book this weekend that Eric lent me called Come Back Barbara.

The most incredible book. I've never read a book so quickly. It's the story of this Christian family in America and this young lady. She turns 18 and she says to her mom and dad, Mom and dad, I want nothing to do with your ways, your beliefs, your morality, or your system of viewing the world.

[19:50] And so she goes off on her own. She says, I'm 18 years old. I'm independent. I'm going to be my own person. And for the next 10 years, she lives this life of absolute hedonism, just pursuing her own pleasures.

And she doesn't realize the absolute heartache and brokenness and pain that she's causing her family. And she wrestles with him and says, why can't you just let me be my own person?

Why are you so concerned? Just let me make my own decisions. Not realizing that her own decisions dramatically and profoundly affect the people in her life. Okay?

Does that make sense? I'll give you another example. Think of when a terrorist attack happens in a city. Right? There's a terrorist attack. What do we do? We stand together. We say, we will not be beaten.

We will not be defeated like that. Why? Because we realize an attack on our city, on our people, is an attack on us. And the last example of this is, I didn't really realize this until the last few years.

[20:47] But in South Africa, there's been a lot of social unrest over the last few years, especially along the lines of race and ethnicity. And I kind of didn't really understand this until I started to ponder the question of my own culpability as a white South African male.

How much am I responsible for apartheid and the sins of my people against another people group in my own nation? And it's interesting because a lot of that happened when I was a child or somebody even before I was born.

And yet I've come to realize that I actually came to benefit with a lot of the sins and the wickedness of my people. I got a fantastic education. I was given job opportunities. I lived in a big house.

And I am the beneficiary of my own people's actions against someone else. In other words, there is a sense of my response. There's a corporate responsibility.

There is a sense in which I am culpable or I stand responsible with those in whom I find solidarity. So we tend to think it doesn't matter what my family or my race or my people have done.

[21 : 55] I'm not responsible for anyone else. But that's just not realistic. And so as a Middle Eastern man brought up in a community, Abraham would have understood this idea of corporate responsibility. Do you understand what I'm talking about?

Does that make any sense at all? Okay? Now, Gerald von Rad, who's a German theologian and Old Testament scholar, he points out that Abraham in this passage is asking a very interesting question.

Abraham is saying this. He says, I know that in some ways the sins of others with whom I am in solidarity come to me. I understand that. But could it work in reverse?

Could it work the other way around? In other words, Abraham is asking the question, what could determine God's treatment of this community in Sodom? Is it only the wickedness of the majority? Or could the righteousness of a few count towards the way that God treats them? He says, God, I know your assessment of the place is right. The majority are wicked. I get that. The outcry is great and their sin is very grave.

[23 : 00] But what is going to determine the way you treat them? Is it only the wickedness of the majority and the righteous get to suffer with them? Or could it be? Could it be that God, you so love righteousness that the righteousness of a few is enough to determine your kind treatment towards this community?

Is there a way that the righteousness of someone else could be credited to my account so that God could treat me, not as I deserve individually, but in accordance with the solidarity or accordance with the righteousness of someone with whom I am in solidarity?

Does that make any sense? So another way of saying it is this. Is my only hope my own record? Or does God, who is righteous and loves righteousness, does he so love righteousness that the righteousness of someone else could be credited to me on my behalf?

Okay? Jared from Rod writes it like this. I think there's a quote. It says, Abraham is in great anguish in mind, knowing that as modern people do not, that as dust and ashes, we have no right to ask God of this.

But what is amazing is how Yahweh's merciful righteousness dawns on Abraham until he arrives at the astonishing fact that even a very small number of righteous people could so please a righteous God that it could hold back the whole judgment.

[24 : 17] So predominant is God's will to save over his will to punish. So you see what he's saying? As modern people, we tend to think, oh, come on. God, just forgive, right?

I mean, I know I'm bad, but I'm not as bad as Hitler, right? I know I'm bad, but I'm not as bad as that guy. God, can't you just sweep my sin under the carpet? Can't you just forgive me? But that's not what Abraham's saying.

Abraham's saying, God, your assessment is right. That place is very wicked. You're right. Sin is a problem. God, it is unjust. I know that you are righteous and I know you love righteousness.

I know that you are a judge of all the earth. I know that. I know that I am but dust and ashes. But God, could it be? Could it be that you so love righteousness that if you found enough righteous people in that place that it would hold back your judgment?

God, is your will to save so predominant that the righteousness of a few would hold back your judgment? And surprisingly, what is God's answer? The answer is yes.

[25 : 19] Yes. And if that's true, Abraham says, well, how far does this principle go? God, for 50 righteous people, 50 righteous people, will you stem back your judgment?

And God says, for 50 people, I will spare the place. Abraham says, God, forgive me for asking. What about for 45 people? Would you hold back your judgment? And God says, for 45, I won't destroy Sodom.

Abraham says, God, what about 40? For 40 people, will you be gracious? And God says, for 40 people, I will hold back my judgment. He says, God, excuse me asking, what about 30 people? For 30? And God says, for 30 people, for the sake of 30, I will not destroy Sodom. He says, God, 20 people? God says, for 20 people, I will not destroy Sodom.

And then finally, he says, God, excuse me one last time. What about 10 people? For the sake of 10 people, will you not destroy Sodom? And God says, for the sake of 10, I will not destroy it.

[26 : 20] And then what? And then what? He's on a cliffhanger, for goodness sake. He's got one more question to ask. And what is the question? What's the question Abraham wants to ask, but doesn't they ask?

For one, right? For one. God, if there is one righteous person, will you destroy Sodom? And what would God's answer be? Yes.

For the sake of one. For the sake of one. If you can find the right one. If you can find the right one. Friends, where on earth, in the planet, are you going to find one righteous person, good enough to stem the judgment that is deserving to come to us?

I guess Abraham must have looked in the mirror and thought, I am the one person in all the world that God has chosen. That through me and my descendants, God is going to bless the world.

Through me and my descendants, the ultimate Messiah is going to come. And Abraham, as he looked in the mirror and thought, if God has chosen me out of all the people in the world, and I am as unrighteous as I am, I am as broken and sinful as I am, where on earth is God going to find one righteous person to hold back his judgment?

[27 : 31] Well, what about Moses? Maybe Moses could have been good enough, right? The great prince of Egypt. The great deliverer. Well, friends, God wouldn't allow Moses into promised land because of his sin and his disobedience.

What about King David? The greatest king Israel ever had? A man after God's own heart? A worshiper? God's shepherd to his people? Could David be the one righteous man?

Well, friends, remember Psalm 51. I read it this morning in my devotions. David writes this and he says, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love.

According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Against you have I sinned. Your judgment is justified. What about someone like Isaiah, the greatest prophet Israel ever had?

Well, Isaiah sees the righteousness of God and he falls on his face and he says, Woe is me. I'm a man of unclean lips and I live amongst the people of unclean lips. You see the corporate responsibility? Friends, none of these people, as righteous and as God-fearing as they were, none of them were able to deliver humanity from the consequences of our sin.

[28 : 38] Where would we find such a man? Well, friends, this is the gospel of the Old Testament. This is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because looming over this passage, in fact, looming over the entire Old Testament, large over the entire Old Testament is the shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ and the shadow of the cross.

Friends, here Jesus Christ, the only righteous man, enough to stand in the gap, the only one righteous enough to bring us before God, the only one righteous enough to bring to bear his righteousness on our behalf, and on Sodom's behalf, and behalf of the whole world, to save us. And so in many ways, Abraham is the first picture we see in the Bible of a priest. A priest is not someone who dresses up in fancy clothes or wears a black gown and performs religious ceremonies.

A priest is someone who mediates on behalf of someone else. A priest is someone who stands before God on behalf of a people. A priest is someone who represents people before God. And Abraham, in some senses, is the very first priest in the Bible.

Now, friends, Jesus Christ is the ultimate high priest. Listen to how Hebrews describes it. He says, He says, Friends, Jesus Christ is the great high priest.

[30 : 42] He says, Friends, in Jesus Christ on the cross, we see that God is so righteous and just that he would not and could not just brush sin under the carpet.

But in Jesus, we also discover the mercy of God and the kindness of God that he would gladly and willingly take our sin upon himself. Remember 2 Corinthians chapter 5? God says, Friends, in many ways, Abraham acts like a priest.

He intercedes on behalf of the people who are living in Sodom. He brings them before God and he represents them before God. But not even Abraham, the great father of Israel, the great father of our faith, not even he could save the city.

Because ultimately, in chapter 19, Sodom is destroyed. Lot is rescued. Lot's family is rescued. But Sodom is destroyed. But friends, Jesus Christ didn't just pray for the world.

He didn't just pray for us. He went to the cross for us. He didn't just ask God to save us. He did save us. He accomplished the salvation that Abraham so longed for but couldn't accomplish himself. [32 : 35] And still today, Christ is praying for us. He's there in the throne room of heaven interceding for us. He's there bringing the blood of the lamb, the cross, before God the father. And friends, if you've ever sinned or done anything wrong, which you do every single day, you know what Satan does?

Satan comes and he accuses you. He comes to the father and says, Father, how can you accept this sinner? Don't you know that you're holy and they've sinned against you? How can their unrighteousness and your righteousness live together?

Father, you need to reject them. You need to kick them out of your kingdom. And what does Jesus do? He says, Father, I've died for them. I've covered them with my righteousness. Friends, even today, Christ is in the throne room of heaven interceding for you, praying for you, priesting for you, representing his righteousness before God the father for you.

Abraham calls on God. God calls Abraham. Abraham calls on God. Finally, let's land with this. Thirdly, we need to learn to pray like Abraham. Friends, let's close with this.

What about us? God calls Abraham to know him because he has a plan for his life. He's going to use Abraham to change the world. He's going to use Abraham to glorify himself.

[33 : 47] God has plans and purposes for him. Abraham is the one through whom the great high priest, Jesus Christ, will ultimately come. Christ, the descendant of Abraham. But that didn't make Abraham unimportant.

God still has a plan for him. And friends, as we said earlier, God has a plan for you. He's got a purpose for your life. You're not an accident. He's going to use your life for his glory.

But we, like Abraham, encounter others. We stand before God. Or will we, like Abraham, encounter others, stand before God on behalf of our city and behalf of the nations? Friends, will we plead with God for Hong Kong?

Will we, like Abraham, wrestle and pray? Will we plead with God for our great city? Will we bring our city before God week in and week out and say, God, for your glory's sake, we bring Hong Kong before you.

And what about the nations of the world? God, in India and Australia and Japan and China, God, we pray, come and visit us. God, be gracious for us. God, be merciful to us.

[34 : 45] Friends, will we pray, like Abraham, for our city. But like Abraham, we need to learn something. We need to understand the gospel. We need to know both the righteousness and the mercy of God.

Because if we come to Christ as our great high priest, we have to come and delight in his righteousness and his mercy. We have to come and revel in his holiness and his forgiveness. We have to come and see in Christ our high priest, both the wonder and the splendor of his forgiveness and his grace and his profound perfection. Because if we don't, what will happen? If we don't see God's righteousness, we'll come in our own self-confidence. We'll come self-righteously. We'll demand that God hears our prayers. Say, God, we prayed for you long enough. Why aren't you hearing us?

We'll think that we are entitled to God's favor. We're entitled to his mercy. But if we come before God and we just come, we just see God's forgiveness, we just see his mercy, what will we do?

[35 : 43] We'll come in dust and ashes. Say, God, we don't really deserve to pray to you. God, we don't think that you can hear our prayers. And every time we sin, we'll say, God, we are sinners. We're not even going to bother to pray because we know you're so holy.

Friends, if we see both the righteousness of God, we'll come in confidence. But if we see the mercy of God, we'll come when we don't feel worthy at all. Friends, we come to God in Jesus' name.

We come in the name of Christ, our great high priest. We don't look down on those that we feel don't deserve it. We do pray for those that we find it hard to pray for. We pray for those that we're intimidated by and those that we feel don't deserve it.

But friends, we do this because we come in Jesus' name. Can we become a church that Christ has called us to? Can we become a church that loves and revels in Christ, our great high priest, full of wonder, full of worship, of who he is and what he's done in the cross for us?

Let's pray together. Will you, actually, maybe let's stay seated and let's pray together. Heavenly Father, as we consider this passage, God, it is scandalous to think about the fact that the

righteousness of Christ, the only righteous one, the only sinless one, that Jesus, you willingly and gladly went to the cross, that you might pour out your righteousness on us.

[37 : 23] God, we think of David's words in Psalm 51. Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

According to your abundant mercy, God, blot out our transgressions. God, wash us thoroughly from our sin. Cleanse us from our iniquity. God, wash us, God, whiter than snow.

But Jesus, our only hope for this is to come to you. And so we do come to you, God. We come and we cast ourselves on you. We throw ourselves at your feet.

Jesus, thank you that because of you and your death on the cross, our only record is not what we have done, but the record of Christ can be attributed to us.

We revel in that. Father, like Abraham, we want to be a church that prays for our city. We want to be a church that loves our city. We want to be a church that makes a difference for your glory, God.

[38 : 36] But God, won't you help us to understand the depth and the extent and the magnitude of your gospel grace, God? Won't you drive the gospel deep into us? Won't you help us to understand you better, Lord God?

Won't you help us to see both your holiness and your grace? God, we pray these things in your wonderful name. Amen.