

Grace, mercy and peace are yours in abundance through faith in our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

After these events the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision. He said, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

²Abram said, “LORD God what can you give me, since I remain childless, and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³Abram also said, “Look, you have given me no offspring, so a servant born in my house will be my heir.”

⁴Just then, the word of the LORD came to him. God said, “This man will not be your heir, but instead one who will come out of your own body will be your heir.” ⁵The LORD then brought him outside and said, “Now look toward the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” He said to Abram, “This is what your descendants will be like.” ⁶Abram believed in the LORD, and the LORD credited it to him as righteousness. **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Children of God,

Our Gospel lesson tells us that on that first Easter evening the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jews. But they also had other concerns. They were talking about the events of the day and wondering if Jesus was really alive. Then Jesus appeared to them and spoke to them to calm their fears and that changed everything, yet Thomas, who wasn’t with them that evening, wasn’t going to believe unless he could see, hear and touch Jesus in person.

Abram’s situation, as described in our sermon text, is a little different and yet, in some ways, the same. He had just won a great victory and rescued his nephew Lot and the people of Sodom and recovered all their property that had been carried off. He should have been elated and celebrating but he was not. There was something weighing heavy on his mind and he needed God to speak to him if any relief was to be found.

As we consider our Gospel lesson from this morning and also Abram’s situation, God’s Word is here to remind us that, **“The Arms of God Support Us.”** They support us, **“When Our Faith is Weak,”** and they support us, **“With the Certain Promises Found in God’s Word.”**

I. As I said earlier, Abram had just won a great victory. He had defeated 4 kings and rescued his nephew Lot. God had been with him and even though he was probably outnumbered in battle, God had given him the victory. As he returned home, he stopped outside of ancient Jerusalem and made an offering to the Lord through the priest Melchizedek. You might say that life couldn’t get any better for Abram. He had material wealth, he had accomplished the rescue of his nephew and recovered his goods and God was with him.

But even though things seemed okay on the outside, Abram was troubled. Go, who knows everything, came to Abram and said, **“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”** Imagine if God came to you and said the very same thing. I would go WOW! God is going to protect me from my enemies and he is going to bless me and provide for my needs even more so than he already has. WOW!

But protection and wealth were not Abram's problems and God knew that as well, yet this prompted Abram to pour out his heart to God. **"²Abram said, "LORD God what can you give me, since I remain childless, and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³Abram also said, "Look, you have given me no offspring, so a servant born in my house will be my heir."** There it was. God had promised Abram a son and yet 10 years later he still had no children. Abram couldn't see how God was going to keep his promise of a son, the promise to make him into a great nation and the promise that the Savior would come through his line. He felt that without a Son, Eliezer, his head servant, would inherit all that he had.

This was causing a great spiritual conflict for Abram. He wanted to believe, but after 10 years he was having doubts about God's promise.

In our lives, the problems and difficulties we face are real. They aren't the same problems Abram had but they can cause us just as much spiritual conflict. We want to believe and trust in God but it is sometimes hard to see how God can help us and so we struggle. Like Abram, we might cry out to the Lord too. Lord you have promised to take care of me so why am I suffering through this terrible pain or cancer or some other illness? Lord you promised to protect me why am I being bullied in school? Lord you promised to provide for me why did I lose my job or Lord why are the crop prices so low I can't make a living? I could go on, but you get the idea – we all have our own personal doubts and troubles.

That's when we are reminded that God's promise to Abram is also his promise to us, **"I am your shield."** I will protect you as I will help you through your troubles. **"I am your great reward."** I will provide for your needs in my own way and time. God knows that life is difficult and just as he listened to Abram pour out his heart, so he listens as we pour out our heart to him as well. Tell God what is troubling you and then listen to him as he speaks to you through his Word and lifts you up with his assurances and promises.

II. God listened to Abram and the first thing he said was, **"This man will not be your heir, but instead one who will come out of your own body will be your heir."** This is another way of saying, "You are going to have a son." The Lord doesn't tell him when but he assures Abram that this is going to happen. But God doesn't stop there. **"⁵The LORD then brought him outside and said, "Now look toward the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." He said to Abram, "This is what your descendants will be like."** God repeats his promise to Abram that he will have many descendants and even though God didn't repeat the promise of a Savior, by now Abram is remembering God's promises and that too was implied.

God gave Abram exactly what he needed – the reassurance of the promises he had already made to Abram. And even though Abram had heard them before – he needed to hear them again. As God spoke to Abram, he was reminded that God does things according to his timeline and so Abram was going to have to be patient and let things unfold according to God's plan for him.

We are the same way. We know God's promises – that Jesus came into this world and that he paid for our sins. Forgiveness is ours through faith. Because of that faith we can go to God in prayer and he will hear and answer our prayers. Through faith we know that God is in control even when things seem so out of control. By faith we know that God will work everything out

for our good even though things don't seem so good at the moment. Through faith we know that even if we have a terminal illness, we won't lose the battle because that illness will end with our victory of heaven. We know these things and yet, just like Abram, our faith wavers at times and we need to hear God speak to us through his Word – to lift us up through his Word.

Satan loves to cast doubts into our hearts but Jesus has overcome Satan and can overcome our doubts and our fears for us as well. As Jesus pours his love into our hearts he can help us to believe and respond as Abram did.

“Abram believed in the LORD, and the LORD credited it to him as righteousness.” He would only see the fulfillment of one of these promises – a son. But he believed that God would fulfill them all and God has. Abram's faith had its ups and downs and so does ours. That is why we want to talk to God regularly and listen to him as well. He knows what we need and he loves us – his death and resurrection assure us of that. So listen as he speaks to you through scripture – take his words of wisdom and comfort to heart. For God is here to lift us up – lift us up out of our sins, lift us up out of our despair – to lift us up with his promises. Amen.