

Finding God in Unexpected Places

Message 14

Roman Series

8.11.24

Opening Scripture for Service:

Psalm 32 (CSB)

Psalm 32

THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS

Of David. A *Maskil*.

¹How joyful is the one
whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered!
²How joyful is a person whom
the LORD does not charge with iniquity
and in whose spirit is no deceit!
³When I kept silent, my bones became brittle
from my groaning all day long.
⁴For day and night your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was drained
as in the summer's heat.

Selah

⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not conceal my iniquity.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Selah

⁶Therefore let everyone who is faithful pray to you immediately.

When great floodwaters come,
they will not reach him.

⁷You are my hiding place;
you protect me from trouble.

You surround me with joyful shouts of deliverance.

Selah

⁸I will instruct you and show you the way to go;
with my eye on you, I will give counsel.

⁹Do not be like a horse or mule,
without understanding,
that must be controlled with bit and bridle
or else it will not come near you.

¹⁰Many pains come to the wicked,
but the one who trusts in the LORD
will have faithful love surrounding him.

¹¹Be glad in the LORD and rejoice,
you righteous ones;
shout for joy,
all you upright in heart.

Sermon

Romans 4:1–12 (CSB)

What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ²If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about—but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say?

Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.

⁴Now to the one who works, pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed. ⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.

⁶Likewise, David also speaks of the blessing of the person to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

**⁷Blessed are those whose lawless acts are forgiven
and whose sins are covered.**

**⁸Blessed is the person
the Lord will never charge with sin.**

⁹Is this blessing only for the circumcised, then? Or is it also for the uncircumcised? For we say, **Faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness.** ¹⁰In what way, then, was it credited—while he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? It was not while he was circumcised, but uncircumcised. ¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while still uncircumcised. This was to make him **the father of all who believe** but are not circumcised, so that righteousness may be credited to them also. ¹²And he became the father of the circumcised, who are not only circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith our father Abraham had while he was still uncircumcised.

1. Circumcision, again?

A. If you are reading through the New Testament, circumcision comes up a lot!

1. The constant attention tells us this was an important issue in Paul's day.

2. The issue was nothing less than whether you could be saved without being physically circumcised.
3. If circumcision was required for salvation, then all men should be circumcised.
4. But if it wasn't necessary, then spare men everywhere the pain!

B. The Jews believed that no circumcised Jew would be allowed into hell.

1. And that teaching tells us that their faith was misplaced.
2. They placed their faith for salvation in a physical ritual instead of the God behind it.

C. Paul is destroying that argument.

1. He is illustrating a simple but profound truth:
 2. Faith in God is what matters.
 - a. More important than Sabbaths, Circumcisions, and festivals is the matter of believing that God is who He claims to be.
 - b. And if He is who HE says He is, then He will do what He says He will do.
 - c. That is what faith is.
 3. A great example of this kind of faith is in the original circumcision story in Genesis.
 - a. Before we look at Genesis 15 in a moment, let me give a little perspective.
 - b. Adam and his sons were not circumcised.
 - b. Noah and his sons were not circumcised.
 - c. The first man of faith who was circumcised was Abraham, around 1,656 years after Adam.

2. Romans 4 as spiritual commentary.

A. Romans 4 could be read as a commentary on two stories in the life of Abraham.

1. The first story begins in Genesis 15.
2. The second story ends in Genesis 21 with the birth of Isaac.
3. A lot of life takes place in between.
 - a. God shows himself multiple times to Abraham.
 - b. There are promises of blessings through covenants.
 - c. Abraham and Sarah are promised a son, but no son is coming.
 1. Sarah tells Abraham to take her slave as a wife.
 2. Abraham does what Sarah says, and Sarah gets mad.
 - d. Then God tells Abraham to be circumcised, so at 99 years old, he circumcises himself and his 13-year-old son Ishmael and all the guys with him.
 - e. Finally, Abraham, at 100 years old, sleeps with his 90-year-old wife, and they have the promised son, Isaac.
4. All these choices Abraham made during this time have consequences even today.
 - a. The descendants of Ishmael are the nations of Islam.
 - b. Apostle Paul was still writing about this in Romans 4.

B. Genesis 15:1–6 (CSB)

After these events, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield;

your reward will be very great.

²But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what can you give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³Abram continued, "Look, you have given me no offspring, so a slave born in my house will be my heir."

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to him: "This one will not be your heir; instead, one who comes from your own body will be your heir." ⁵He took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "Your offspring will be that numerous."

⁶Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

3. "What can you give me?"

A. The Lord had first appeared to Abraham 20 years before. (Gen 12.)

1. Seemingly, out of nowhere, God meets Abraham and makes a covenant or promise with him.
2. The promise: You will become the father of many nations, and all the nations will be blessed through you.
3. Abraham, like the rest of us, believed the promise was for NOW not 25 years in the future.

B. As 20 years pass, God meets Abraham again here in Genesis 15.

1. God speaks good things to Abraham:

a. Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield; your reward will be very great.

b. These should be words of great comfort and encouragement.

2. But Abraham responds from a place of despair.

a. Abraham asked, "What can you give me?"

b. If you can't give me a son, then why do I want you to protect me or provide for me?

c. "If I can't have the desire of my heart, then what does it matter?"

C. Have you ever been in a season where it seems like God is giving you everything EXCEPT what you are asking for?

1. The Lord is blessing and providing in many arenas and areas.
2. God is showing you favor and blessing.
3. But the most important need is still pending!
 - a. Your kids are prospering, but that one is still in need of a miracle.
 - b. The Lord healed your friend, but your healing is still pending.
 - c. The Lord provided one financial need, but the one that has you stressing is still there.

D. God, what can you give me?

1. Abraham had EVERYTHING He needed, except an heir.
2. Abraham waited, believed, and even practiced his faith.
3. Each month, there is no sign of pregnancy, no hope of a future.

4. The Power of a Promise.

A. When God makes a promise, He keeps it.

1. The timing may seem off or even wrong.
 - a. The delay, painful.
 - b. The deadlines threatening.
2. Abraham could feel the clock running out.
3. And it seemed that God was faithful in all of the other arenas but this one.

B. Abraham asked, "What can you give me?"

1. But the Apostle Paul asks: What was it that Abraham found?

2. Read that again:

*What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ²If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about—but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? **Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.** ⁴Now to the one who works, pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed. ⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.*

C. The Apostle Paul says that instead of Abraham receiving what he deserved, he received a gift.

1. Abraham didn't deserve to be the father of many nations.
2. Abraham didn't deserve to be the focus of God's work in humanity.
3. But because Abraham continually chose to believe God, that faith was credited for righteousness.
 - a. Instead of receiving death, Abraham received blessing.
 - b. Abraham received right standing with God.
 - c. Abraham entered into relationship with the Almighty.
4. **When we believe God, we receive far more than we deserve.**

D. Abraham wasn't perfect in his belief.

1. I encourage you to read these chapters of Genesis before next week.
2. You will not see a superhero or even a saint.
3. You will read about a human, just like you and I, who struggled but, through it all, believed.

5. When we trust God, we receive far more than we bargained for.

A. Notice once more what Paul says about Abraham: Vs9

For we say, **Faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness.** ¹⁰In what way, then, was it credited—while he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? It was not while he was circumcised, but uncircumcised. ¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while still uncircumcised. This was to make him the father of all who believe but are not circumcised, so that righteousness may be credited to them also. ¹²And he became the father of the circumcised, who are not only circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith our father Abraham had while he was still uncircumcised.

1. Paul's argument is that Abraham is not only the Father of Israel but also of the Gentiles.
2. Because Abraham believed BEFORE he was circumcised, he is the Father of us all.

B. What did Abraham find?

1. He found Blessing, righteousness, justification, and relationship.
2. Abraham found a right standing with God apart from circumcision, law, or work.
 - a. Everything he received was by faith.
 - b. Abraham was circumcised because he believed.
3. Faith is the currency of spiritual things.
 - a. It's the access into the kingdom.
 - b. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Heb. 11:6
 - c. To experience God and all He has for us, we must approach Him with faith.

C. ABRAHAM was Circumcised BEFORE he fathered Isaac. Gen. 17 and 21.

1. Not to be crass, but every time Abraham went to Sarah, he was reminded of the Covenant and Promise.

2. He didn't know how, and he didn't know when.

a. But through it all, he believed, and it was credited to him.

b. Because he believed, he is the father of all who have faith and believe.

6. Abraham wanted to be the father of Isaac: God wanted Abraham to be the father of all who believe.

A. Abraham wanted an heir.

1. God wanted Abraham to have a nation of heirs.

2. Abraham wanted A son.

3. God wanted Abraham to have descendants too numerous to count.

B. Abraham produced an heir on his own through Hagar, and that was a curse.

1. Ishmael was born 13 years before the sign of circumcision.

2. Ishmael was a son of the flesh, not of faith.

3. God wanted Abraham to have an heir through faith that would be a blessing.

a. Sometimes, there is blessing in the delay.

b. Sometimes, there is favor in waiting.

c. Sometimes, God is merciful even though we think He is unfair.

d. Sometimes, God is acting good toward us when we think He is being mean.

e. Faith trusts God and God's process.

1. You don't have faith in God if you don't trust His timing.
2. You aren't acting in faith if you don't trust His intentions.
3. Belief doesn't manipulate.

Apply. The Waiting is worthy it.

A. Some of us in the room are in a place of waiting.

1. We are beginning to wonder if God has forgotten us.
2. He is blessing some areas, and yet seems missing in the most important.
3. And it's tempting to work harder, to try to earn more favor and manipulate the timing of the Lord.
4. When all God is asking of you is to believe.

B. I don't know what promise you are waiting for, but I'm happy to proclaim that you have a sign better than circumcision.

1. For Abraham and Israel, the physical sign was a reminder of God's covenant.
2. For the believer, God's promises are evidenced in an old, rugged cross, an empty tomb, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

C. I'm not sure what you're waiting for, but I want to implore you not to give up.

1. This morning if you are waiting for a miracle, holding on to a promise, or interceding for a family member, I want to invite you to stand across this place.
2. For the next few minutes, I'm going to lead us in a time of prayer.