

### Setting the scene – what’s happening?

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Well today we’re jumping an episode or two of Abram’s story, and we’re landing into chapter 14. And what an unusual episode it is to look at. There are many names and places and it can be a bit confusing to see what’s going on. I don’t know about you, but the first time I read the first 12 verses I got a little confused about what was happening.

So let’s just take a step back and let’s set the scene for our passage today.

So far in our story we’ve seen Abram as a man who has faith in God. He listened to God’s command in Genesis 12 to go and he obediently left everything behind and went to the land that God will show him. Then, at the end of chapter 12, he spent some time in Egypt, and with this part of the story, he was not so good at trusting in God’s word. His lack of faith in God showed in his actions, he was afraid that he would be killed by pharaoh because of his beautiful wife Sarah, and he comes up with his own terrible scheme to stay alive in the situation. It was an epic fail in regards to Abram trusting God. But despite his fail, God continued to show him grace, and Abram left Egypt an even wealthier man with his wife and Lot beside him. And in chapter 13, we see again Abram trusting in God’s promises as he allows Lot to choose his own plot of land first. It seems that Abram had a faith in God that said I trust God will provide for me the land he promised, even if Lot settles in the best land that can be seen. We are then told that Abraham is living near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron and Lot pitched his tent near Sodom.(show map). Our main characters then get put aside for a while in our story in chapter 14, and our story begins with a large number of unusual names Kings of places, and what unfolds before us are scenes of a number of battles. Interestingly, it’s the first recorded war in the bible. And so what’s happening in chapter 14?

Well there are 9 kings named in these battles.. On one side you have King Kedorlaomer and his three allied Kings and on the other side you have 5 kings. King Kedorlaomer and his friends have been the Superpower in the area for 12 years, King Kedorlaomer seems to be the head King. And in the 13<sup>th</sup> years these 5 Kings decide to rebel which meant, among other things, that they probably stopped paying massive sums of “protection” money to King Kedorlaomer every year. So King Kedorlaomer, who isn’t too happy about this, decides to show them who is Boss, and so he gathers his armies and goes on a march and defeats all these towns and places(show map of defeat). He has made sure that these 5 kings and their cities are not surrounded by anyone who can help them as he’s defeated them all. The armies of the 5 kings come out to meet the armies of the 4 kings, and all we get told is that two of the Kings Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some ending up in tar pits, some fleeing to the hills. In the end, King Kedorlaomer defeats them all, he takes all the goods, all the food and they went back home. The author wants us to know, that this is not a little battle, King Kedorlaomer has defeated and captured everything in his path. Now if we stopped here at this point in our story, we could say what a nice story of a battle between Kings. We aren’t really invested in these kings, but if we read on, to verse 12 and beyond, the author brings into the story, the characters that we know. The author slips into the story, Oh and by the way, King Kedorlaomer also carried off Abram’s nephew Lot and his possessions. And bang – the author has got our attention. We’re back with our friends Abram and Lot. So the question that jumps out at us is, What is Abram going to do? What are we going to see? A man who lacks faith in God or a man who has faith in God?

Well, to spoil the story for you... we see a man who has faith in God. And his faith in God allows him to live magnanimously.

Now, I've just used a pretty big word – magnanimous. What does the word mean? The dictionary tells us that the word magnanimous is a combination of two Latin words—magnus meaning great and animus meaning spirit—suggesting a great and courageous spirit. It is someone who has a noble and generous spirit. In a word, it's bigheartedness. A magnanimous person is able to face trouble calmly, to set aside meanness and revenge, and to make sacrifices for worthy ends. It is someone who takes delight in doing great deeds for the benefit of others.

Someone like Mother Theresa who chose to live a life of poverty to care and love those who were poor and sick was a magnanimous person.

In our story today, we see Abraham as a magnanimous person because of his faith in God. How does he show us this?

## Abraham shows magnanimous faith in God through his actions

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- Going to war

Well, in verse 14, Abram, after hearing about what has happened to Lot and his possessions. We're on the edge of our seats wondering, What is Abram going to do? What do you think could have been going through his mind as he makes the decision of what to do?

He could have thought – woah, this is way too big for me, the 4 Kings are way too powerful, the risk of me and others with me dying or being captured, is high. I'm not going to have anything to do with this.

Or maybe he could have thought – Lot's a big boy, he made his decision to go and live near Sodom a place where godless people and wickedness live, he needs to take on the consequences that he had decided, why should I give up my resources and perhaps even my life to go and rescue him.

Well what did Abram do? In verse 14 As soon as Abram heard about Lot, he called out his 318 trained men and went after Kedorlaomer. It's almost like there was not really a hard decision to make. No matter the risk, Abram chose to rescue Lot. Abram seems to no longer be worried about his life and he's off to battle the super Kings. Abram's actions at this point are magnanimous aren't they? He didn't have to be involved, he's had nothing to do with the battles going on. But, he's generous in his actions, not only towards Lot, but to all the people that Kedorlaomer captured. I think Abram goes because of his love for Lot. And we are told that Abram and his men pursued Kedorlaomer, and it was a success, they recovered all the goods and brought back all the people, including Lot and his possessions. What a great Victory for Abram.

Now just imagine for a second that you're Abram, on your way back home, you've just defeated the super kings in the area. You've got all the goods, all the people with you, you are now the super King yourself. How might you be feeling or thinking?? Perhaps you're feeling pretty good about what you've done? Or you might be thinking, that was a job well done Abram? That was the right kind of plan of attack. How easy could it have been for Abram to take the glory of this Victory for himself? Is this how God was going to give Abram the promised land?

Well, the last part of our story helps us to understand Abram's mindset after the attack. In verses 17-24 as Abram meets two kings and they could not be any different from each other. As I looked at this part of the story, it's almost like a choose your own adventure section for Abram. Before him are 2 Kings, both are offering him two very different things. And What Abram chooses next will demonstrate to us where

Abram's faith lies. And as we see this story unfold, we again see that Abram's faith lies in God and it produces magnanimous actions.

- Meeting with the two Kings

So let's have a look at these interactions between Abram and the two kings.

King Sodom seems to be the first one to meet Abram but at first all we get is silence from him. Then Melchizedek king of Salem meets Abram in verse 18, and we see that he brings bread and wine for Abram and words of blessing. Who is this King? As we read this story he comes out of nowhere. But we do get told a few things. He's the King of Salem and he was the priest of the God Most High. Just for some background, The name Melchizedek means King of Righteousness, and the place Salem is also known as Jerusalem. And the word Salem means peace. So King Melchizedek was the God-fearing priest-king of Jerusalem. This is the only historical account of Melchizedek in the bible, and yet he is one of the most curious characters in the bible. We don't have time to go into the mysteries of Melchizedek today, but I do want to mention one thing about Melchizedek and Abram's response. He comes to Abram with gifts of food and with a gift of a blessing. Melchizedek is gracious here with his gifts and blessing towards Abram. And what is Abram's response to Melchizedek? It is to give him honour and worship and he does it by giving him a tenth of everything. Abram's actions here acknowledges that yes, God has given all of this to me, and his response to God's grace is that he gives back a tenth of everything, to the priest of the God Most High. Abraham shows faith in God by not taking the glory himself, but ultimately realising that the glory goes to the Lord Most High, and he appropriately honours God by giving a tithe to Melchizedek. Abram is magnanimous as he acknowledges that all he has comes from God.

The other thing I want to briefly mention is this. The writer of the book of Hebrews links Melchizedek to Jesus, As a priest-king, Melchizedek points us towards a better priest- king and his name is Jesus. How does Melchizedek point us towards Jesus? Well, one of the things that Melchizedek is portrayed as, is a symbol of grace in both Genesis and Hebrews, and so as we look to Jesus and his sacrifice for us, we find grace in Jesus, and we see that He is the one who offers us something even better than bread and wine, he offers to us the gift of eternal life. How do we respond to this gift? Just like Abraham, as we choose and receive the gift of eternal life, and we are to honour God in our lives as we realise that all that we have comes from God. We too are to be magnanimous in the way we live.

Well, in stark contrast to Melchizedek is the King of Sodom. The King of Sodom comes to get. He seems to forget that Abram is the one who has everything. The King of Sodom doesn't even say thanks for rescuing my people and all our possessions. He starts off by making a deal with Abram. The King of Sodom is most likely trying to be in a partnership with Abram. But Abram is fully aware of what's happening. Abram shows faith in God by not taking the money possessions from Sodom, he knows what kind of people are from Sodom, they have no regard for God, he doesn't want to have anything to do with any shady compromises and so he doesn't take their money or want to have anything to do with them.

So we have Abram, 2 kings, 2 choices and we see him choose to honour King Melchizedek, we see Abram as a man who is a magnanimous in his actions, because he has faith in God.

At the end of this account, Abram is literally left with nothing. 10% went to Melchizedek, 90% went to the King of Sodom and to Abram's men. Abram didn't gain anything from the victory, except for a strengthened faith in God. And if we take a sneak peek at Gen 15:1 we see that, God says to Abram.. "Do not be afraid Abram, I am your shield, your very great reward" He receives a strengthened faith in God who is his shield and very great reward. and To find out what happens next... come back next week.

## God delivers...

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And at this point, I just wanted us to step back again to see what God is doing. Because we see that Abram has faith in God, but how do we know that God is someone that we can trust?

Well, this chapter highlights to us that God delivers on his promises. In this chapter we can see that God does keep his promises. He is a trustworthy God.

In chapter 13, we see that God's promise to give Abram land and offspring is repeated but this time, Abraham can see the land with his own eyes, and he can even walk in the land and touch the dusty ground with his own hands. Little by little, God is delivering on the promise he has given to Abram.

In chapter 14, We don't really see God being mentioned at all in the first 18 verses of this chapter. But we see that all along, God has had his sovereign control over it all, Abram successfully and miraculously defeats the 4 Kings, and Abram and Melchizedek rightly acknowledge that it is God who delivered the enemies into the hands of Abram. Abram was right to trust in God, and his faith allowed him to be magnanimous in his actions.

We are seeing the beginning of God's promises to Abram being fulfilled, they haven't been fully realised yet, but God is being faithful to his promises. And we're seeing that in every step that Abram takes.

So when we look to the promises that God gives to us we can trust that God will deliver.

## What do we learn from this unusual episode?

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The first thing that we can learn from this unusual episode is this:-

Our journey of walking with God by faith can be like Abram's, there may be moments where we will have certain faith in God, and there may be moments in our life where we will stumble and fall, and not trust God in aspects of our life as Abram did. However, we can be certain that God will be with us always. He is a faithful and trustworthy God. We can aim to strengthen our faith and trust in God and his promises, just as Abram trusted in God's promise to him.

And the question to ask ourselves is this, As we trust in God's promises does it show in our actions?

As we look for a new job, do we have faith in God?

As we decide what school our children are to attend, do we have faith that God is in control?

As we look for a house, do you have faith that God will provide for you?

As you look for a husband or wife, do you have faith that God knows what and who might be best for you?

As you look for a place to retire, do you have faith in God?

When the question is asked, do you have faith in God, Do you wonder what does that actually mean?

How do you show that you have faith in God in these situations? While there are a variety of actions that can reflect faith in each of these situations, what I want to focus on this morning, is one action that is applicable in all circumstances, one action that shows faith in good times and in bad, and it's an action that we can learn to be better at, and it is prayer. As we talk to God about the different situations in life, it shows that we are depending upon him, we are seeking God's guidance, we are seeking his help. In our passages today in chapter 13, we see twice Abram calling upon the name of the Lord as he worships God. Are we calling upon the name of the Lord in our lives?

As you look for the job on seek.com, are you also in prayer asking that God's will be done and praying that the right kind of job will be there for you?

As we seek wisdom from others about what you should do about your future, are you also praying for wisdom from God?

As you decide what school your children are to attend, are you in prayer to God that he might find the right school for your family?

As you look for that house on domain.com, are you also asking God to help you to find the right kind of house for you and your family? Are you depending upon him, the one who knows what is best for you?

What is your situation in life? Fill in the blanks for you..

As you ..... are you prayerfully trusting God?

As we share with people about who God is and how Jesus is the good news that brings salvation, are we prayerfully trusting that God will work through us for his glory.

AS we talk to God about all the different situations in our life, we begin to depend upon him knowing that he is a sovereign God who loves and cares for us. It is one of the ways that we can show our faith in the Lord, God Most High.

And lastly, I was also thinking about how does our trust in God lead us to be magnanimous in the way that we live?

There are many ways that we can be magnanimous, one of them is in financial ways, but also it is in the way that we live. We are to be magnanimous.

I asked myself the question, am I rescuing the Lot's in my life? Am I bringing the good news of Jesus to those who are captured by the world? Am I living magnanimously?

Are we bringing the good news to others, or are we afraid of the rejection and embarrassment we might face?

I read a comment by person called Deyoung and it made me think about magnanimous Abraham and about how I could be magnanimous in my living. He says, Magnanimous people radiate God's beauty and goodness in the world, drawing others to that glory..."

So my prayer and hopefully your prayer, is that we are people who trust in God and his promises, that we are prayerful in all areas of our life, and as we live our lives that we are magnanimous people who radiate God's beauty and goodness in the world that draws people to Christ.

Let me Pray