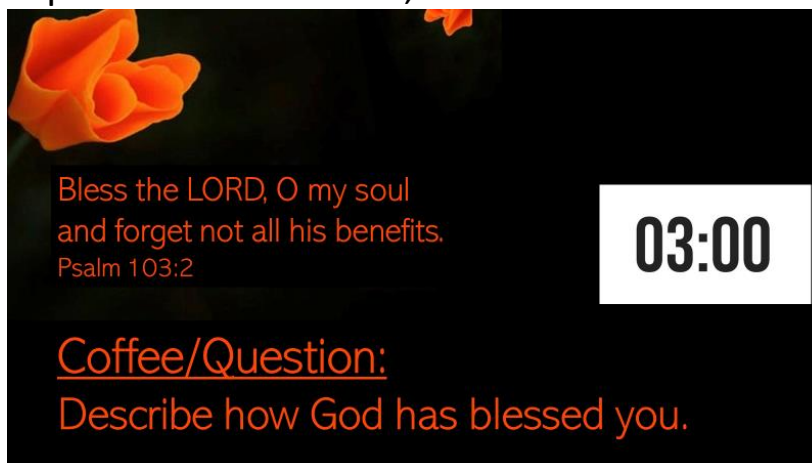




Express thanks to all who led in worship and in prayer throughout May. Express thanks to Chris, Sean and Richard for teaching the Word.



Our passage for today is Genesis 24:1.



How old was Abraham at this point?

Look at Genesis 23:1.

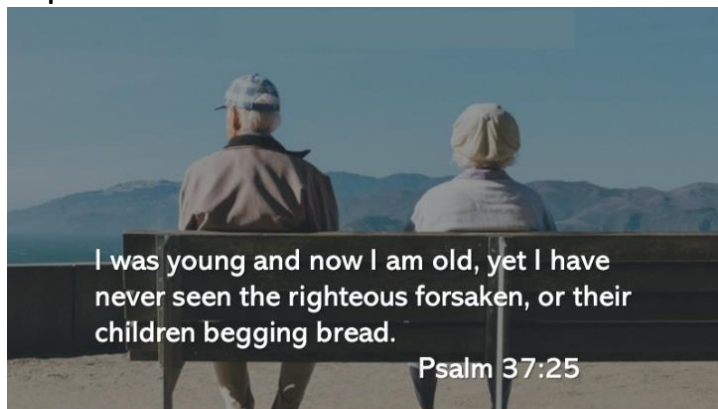
Abraham was 10 years older than Sarah, so that means at this point in the story he was 137 years old and had been following God for 62 years.

Genesis 24:1 is explicitly clear.

What had God done for Abraham?

God had blessed him in every way, in spite of Abraham's disappointments, regrets, challenges and testing's.

Listen to how the psalm writer... hundreds of years later... described his experience with God.



What does it mean to be forsaken?

It means... to be abandoned.

All who have followed the triune God and who have walked by faith in relationship with him, are able to testify to the truthfulness of what the psalm writer said –

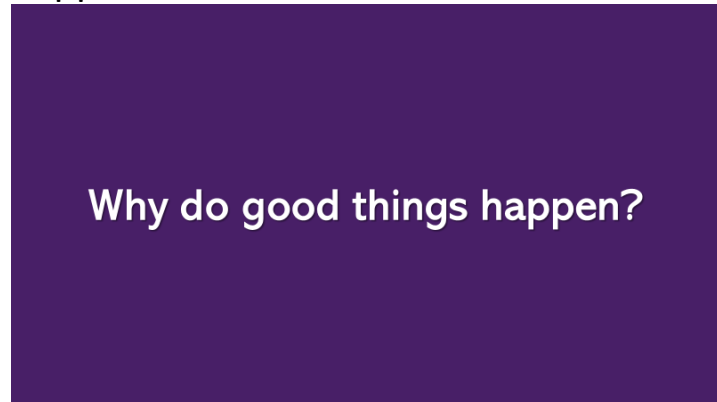
God does not abandon those to whom he has gifted righteousness.

A question that can haunt... the followers of Jesus... is this – why do bad things happen... and a variant of this question is – why do bad things happen to those in relationship with God?

In the asking of this question... there is risk... of being manipulated... by humanity's spiritual adversaries... who constantly look for ways to cause one to be offended by God...

...and then to relentlessly whisper lies into the human soul.... that if God truly cared, that if God truly is good, that if God is truly all powerful... he would have intervened... he would have stopped... he would have protected from...

The intent of our spiritual adversaries is to sow distrust in the one person in the whole universe who is completely good and trustworthy. The question that should be asked... is this... not... why bad things happen, but...



This question actually points us to the triune God and his intent for humanity when he created us, and all that is.

God reveals that he is good...



... and that everything he does is good.

God tells us that he imbued all he created with his goodness.



God tells us that humanity... along with the creation is not as it once was.

In the beginning, everything brimmed with goodness.

The fact that there is evil in the world, is not because of God.



It was humanity, deceived by the fallen angels, who opened the door for sin and death to enter into human nature and experience.

The story of the Bible is the story of the extraordinary lengths to which the triune God has gone in order to rescue humanity from a destiny that we were helpless to change.

Every good gift and every perfect gift
is from above, coming down from the
Father of lights, with whom there is
no variation or shadow due to change.

James 1:17

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The greatest gift from above... is our LORD Jesus who came from heaven, who lived a perfect life among us, and then gave that life in sacrifice in order to pay humanity's sin debt in full ... and to disarm our spiritual adversaries who had taken humanity captive to do their will.

Three days after he died, Jesus rose from the dead.
He is the irrefutable proof that new creation has come into the present and that God will make all things new.

We live in an in between time – this present age has not ended, but new creation has begun.

The One we love and the One we follow ...incredibly, shockingly, and magnificently...turns things that are intended to harm into good.



And we know that for those who love God
all things work together for good, for those
who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

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It was out of his superabundant goodness... that God blessed Abraham.
But what does that mean – to be blessed?
In the case of Abraham God had fulfilled his promises to Abraham.
God did what he said he would do.

In Genesis 12, God had promised:

“I will make you into a great nation.”
“I will make your name great.”
“You will be a blessing to all peoples
on the earth.”

In Genesis 15 God had promised:

“I am your shield.”
“I am your very great reward.”
“You and Sarah will give birth to a son.”
“Your descendants will be as numerous
as the stars.”
“To your descendants I give this land.”

In Genesis 17 God had promised:

“You will be the father of many nations.”

“I will bless Ishmael and from him will come twelve rulers.”

“I give to you and Sarai new names.”

In Genesis 17 God had promised:

“I enter into a covenant relationship with you and your descendants, to be yours and their God.”

“I give you this land, the whole land of Canaan.”

“I will establish my covenant with Isaac and his descendants.”

In Genesis 18, God had promised:

“Sarah will bear a son in her old age.”

In Genesis 12 and again in Genesis 20,
God had intervened to save Abraham and Sarah from Abraham’s fear and folly.

In Genesis 22, God had provided for
Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah.

In Genesis 22, God had promised:

“I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore.”

“Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies.”

“Through your offspring all nations will be blessed.”

In Genesis 23, God gave Abraham favor with Ephron the Hittite and Abraham was able to purchase a field and a cave in which to bury Sarah.

God blessed Abraham ...



... in every way.

It wasn't that every promise had been fully realized.

Let me explain.

- Abraham and Sarah had one child – not descendants as numerous as the stars and the sand on the seashore.

- Abraham and Sarah owned one well at Beersheba and a burial cave in Hebron – not the whole land, nor the cities of the Canaanites.

But what God had said he would do, he had begun to do.



Think of God’s promises like a seed.
For Abraham and Sarah... the seed was not only in the ground, it had germinated and begun to sprout.

Abraham saw God’s promises to him and his descendants... being fulfilled... even though his seeing was...



It is the nature of God... as Hebrews 11:6 says... to reward those who seek him.

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

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In the story of Job, we discover that Satan was deeply offended by God and believed that the only reason Job followed God was because God had bribed him with blessing after blessing.

Satan said to God...

**Does Job fear God for nothing?
Have you not put a hedge around him
and his household and everything he has?**

**You have blessed the work of his hands,
so that his flocks and herds
are spread throughout the land.
But now stretch out your hand
and strike everything he has,
and he will surely curse you to your face."
Job 1:9-11**

Because of his own hatred of God, Satan believed that no one would follow God... if God didn't bless them.

Was Satan right?

The book of Job answers that question.

Job didn't follow God for what he could get out of God.

Job followed God because he loved God.

All who follow God love God because... he first loved us.
This truth cannot be over-emphasized.

God is the initiator.

His followers obey him... not to get from God... but to express their love for God.

As John 3:16 says, for God so loved the world... that he gave his one and only Son.

God is the initiator.

This is why his people in obedience ... give ourselves wholeheartedly to the triune God.

I ask again: what is the reward God gives to those who seek him?

It is not possessions or wealth, not even health.

The reward God gives... is himself.

Do you remember the parable of the talents?

To the two servants who took what had been entrusted to them by their master and then multiplied it, the master upon his return said to both of them...

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

Matthew 25:21

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What I put before you this morning... is that their reward was not primarily being set over much, but entering into the joy of their master, of being near to him and in close relationship with him.

The LORD blessed Abraham...



... in every way.

Abraham shared in the joy of God and in God's plan to save.
Abraham was known by God and loved by God and there was and there
is no greater blessing than this.

Listen to this summary statement of Abraham's life.

Hebrews 11:8-16a

Let me say it again.

Because God loved Abraham, he blessed him in every way.

It was not Abraham's obedience to God that earned him God's blessing.
Abraham's obedience was a response of gratitude, of trust, of choice...
because he loved God.

There is one more piece to consider.

It is a summary statement made in Hebrews 11 regarding God's disposition to those who love him because he has loved them.

Hebrews 11:16b
Therefore, God is not ashamed
to be called their God,
for he has prepared a city for them.

We don't typically talk like this.

But it is unavoidable in this verse.

God was not ashamed... but was proud to be the God of Abraham.

God who does not change... is proud to be your God.

Do you find this truth hard to receive... that God delights in you; that he is proud of you; that he is not ashamed to be known as your God?

He not only desires to be in a relationship with us in this present time, but he has committed himself, as he did for Abraham... to prepare a place whereby we might live with him forever.

Hebrews 11 identifies this place as a city.

The book of Revelation calls this city the new Jerusalem, saying it will be located in a new heaven and a new earth... where righteousness dwells, where nothing is broken anymore, where the curse of death has been removed.

I love that God uses terms we are familiar with – a city, a home, the earth... to help us understand what his future... looks like.

We are meant to ponder, to think upon... the life that follows the age of death... the life of the ages...

But we do so with this understanding...

No eye has seen

no ear has heard

no mind has conceived

**what God has prepared
for those who love him.**

2 Corinthians 2:9

In this present time, we experience God's blessing, and it is beyond wonderful... the blessing of being known and loved by God.

But the Bible tells, us that everything we have received is like a downpayment, it's like a first fruit.

The fulfillment of God's promises in the age to come.... is beyond our capacity to fully grasp.

Try and think of it like this.

Remember the prodigal son?

We've experienced the welcome of God when we turned our lives toward Jesus and received him into our lives as our LORD and Savior.

We've experienced forgiveness.

We've experienced the love of God's being poured into our hearts.

But this is but a taste of what is to come.

There is a welcome that will be the welcome of all welcomes... when we pass from this life to the next and God the Father throws his arms around us and kisses us, and announces to all in his home, "This is my daughter; this is my son! Celebrate with me!" and says to us, "You are home. Enter into my joy!"

In Jesus Christ we have been blessed with every blessing.
In Jesus Christ all of God's promises are a yes, meaning in Christ all of them are ... and all of them will be fulfilled.

The best is yet to come.
This is our hope.
This is who we trust in.

How marvelous, how wonderful is the triune God!
We love and adore and praise him from whom all blessings from!