

It is important to take note that Abram did not build a home at the first site that he and Sarai found inviting.

Rather, they travelled... through... the land.

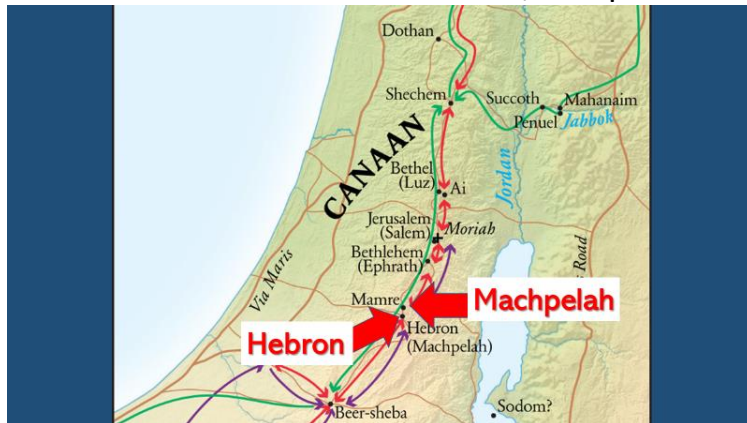
Exploring, discovering, delighting ... like when people first move to Sooke – the Spit, the Potholes, all the beaches, the surrounding hills, etc.

Abram and Sarai did make their home... in the promised land.

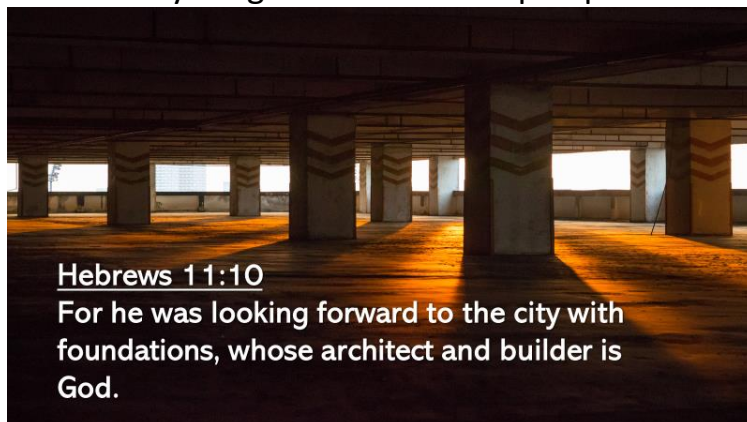
But throughout the remainder of their lives, they lived in tents.... they never built a permanent home; they never owned land in Canaan.



Here I need to qualify - Abram did purchase the cave and adjoining field of Ephron the Hittite after the death of Sarai, as a place to bury her remains.



Why did Abram and Sarai live like strangers?  
It had everything to do with their perspective on life.



Hebrews 11:10

For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Their hope was not in the land of Canaan, but in the city, designed... built... and prepared by God... for them – Hebrews 11:16.  
That they had this hope, is evidenced by what they longed for.



They longed for... a better country.

This does not mean they pined after some place else in the world.

There is a German word which has no English equivalent - zeensokt

sehnsucht

This word describes...

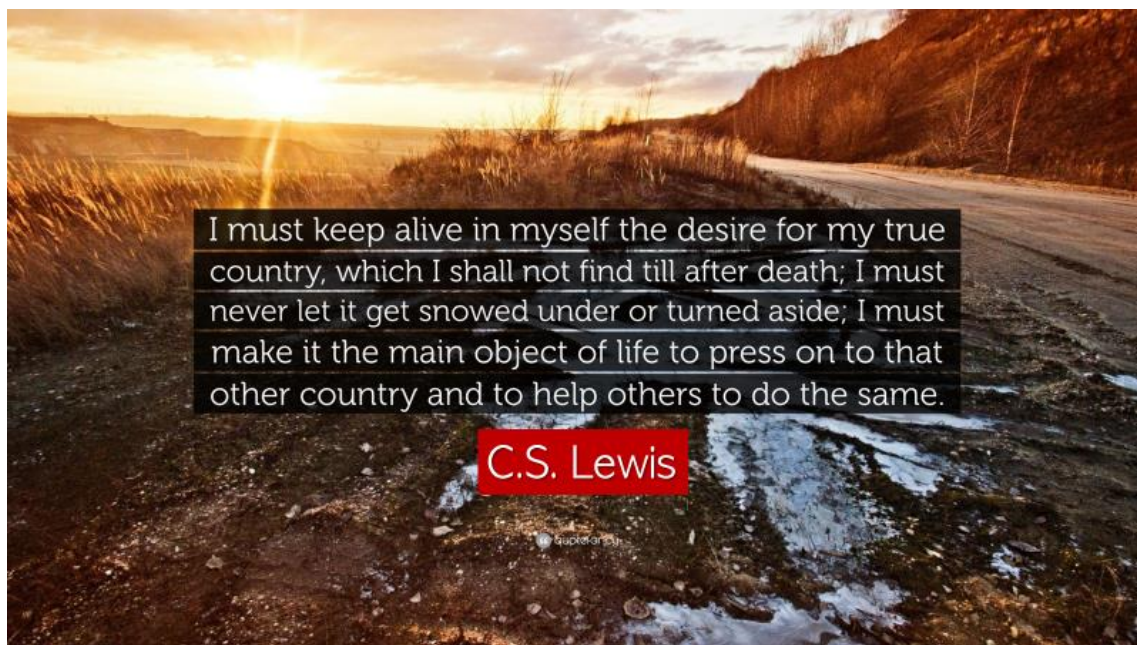
sehnsucht

An intense yearning for something far off  
and undefinable

CS Lewis used this word to describe the longing within his own heart... for the heavenly home which he never saw, but by faith, knew existed.

He wrote this about his longing for the country and the city whose architect and builder are God.





I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same.

C.S. Lewis

The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of how this great soul longing within Jesus' followers is meant to impact our day to day lives.



Hebrews 12:1-2

"...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus..."

Lewis wrote - I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country.

The writer of Hebrews said - let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

Lewis wrote - I must not let it get snowed under or turned aside.

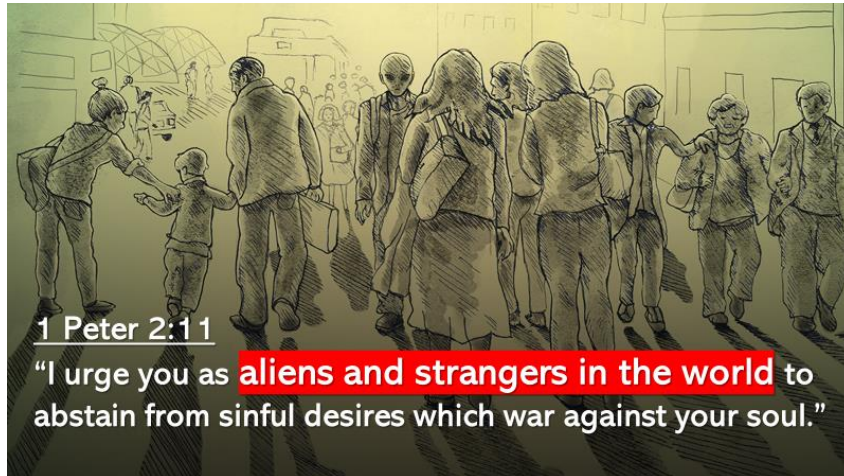
The writer of Hebrews said – let us run with perseverance.

Lewis wrote - I must make it the main object of my life.

The writer of Hebrews said – let us fix our eyes on Jesus.

It wasn't that Abram and Sarai were dissatisfied with the land of Canaan; they just knew that there was in the promises of God so much more... and they never lost sight of that.

The hope of Abram and Sarai is the hope of all who follow Jesus.  
It's this hope that explains why, as Peter taught in his first epistle, 2:11...

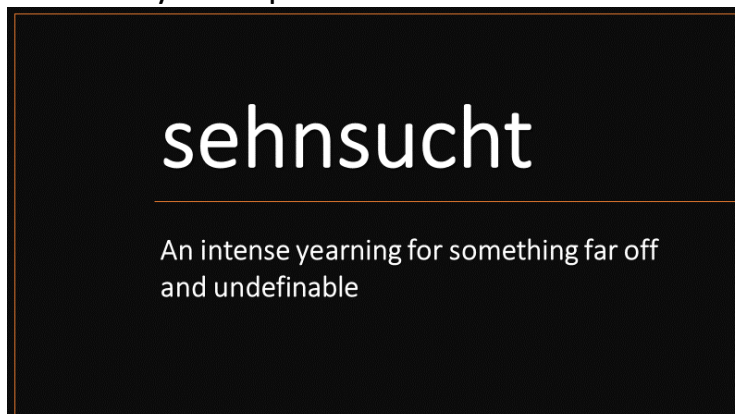


... we live as "aliens and strangers in the world."

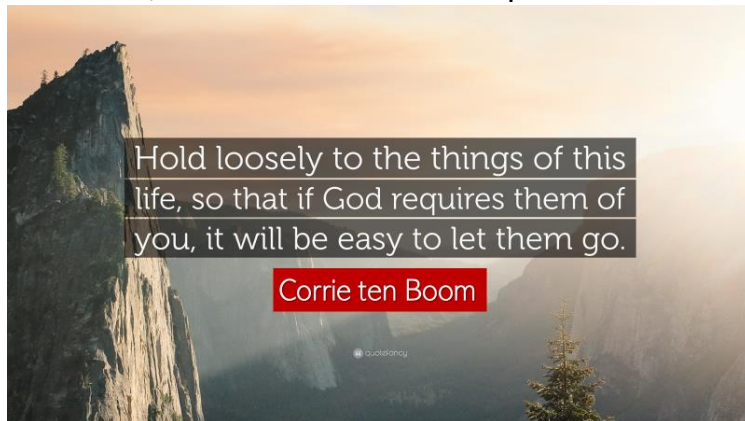
In Jesus Christ God has called to another land.  
This world is not our home.  
We are... as Philippians 3:20 teaches...



... citizens of heaven.  
This is why we experience...

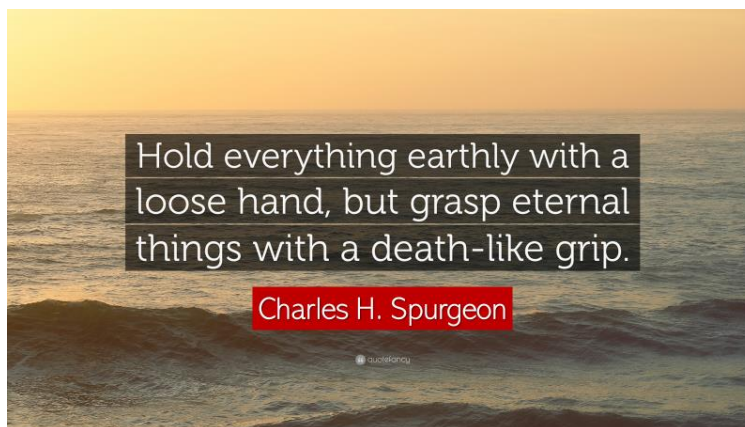


It is also why, as God's people, we hold everything loosely.  
We do so, as Corrie Ten Boom explains...



... in order that if God requires anything of us, we can easily give it to him.

But a primary reason we hold everything in this life lightly is so that we can hold tightly to our God and the hope he has called us to in Jesus Christ.  
He is our treasure.



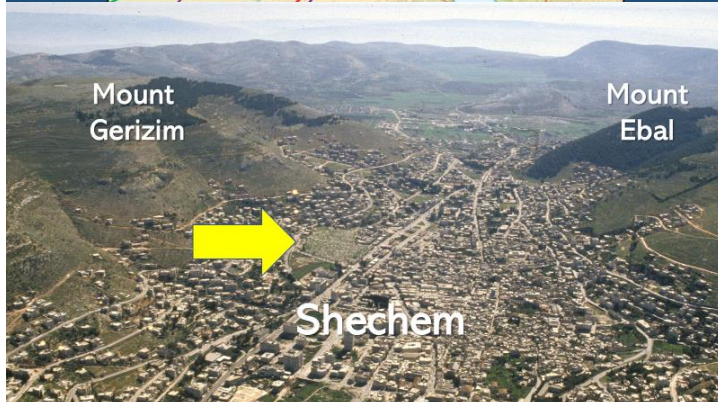
This is what Jesus meant when he said to his disciples... seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, Matthew 6:33.

Look again at Genesis 12:6



**Genesis 12:6**

Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.



**ruins of ancient Shechem**



Bruce Waltke in his commentary says that in the Hebrew language the word "site" has the sense of "sacred site." p.207

In that day and time, people would worship fertility deities under such trees as the one Abraham discovered at Shechem.

The people who worshiped at the great tree of Moreh... are identified as the Canaanites.... who were the descendants of Noah through his second son, Ham.

One of the things we discover in this verse is that when God called Abram and Sarai to go to a land he would give to him, it was not an empty land... but was inhabited.

This simple statement has profound implications.

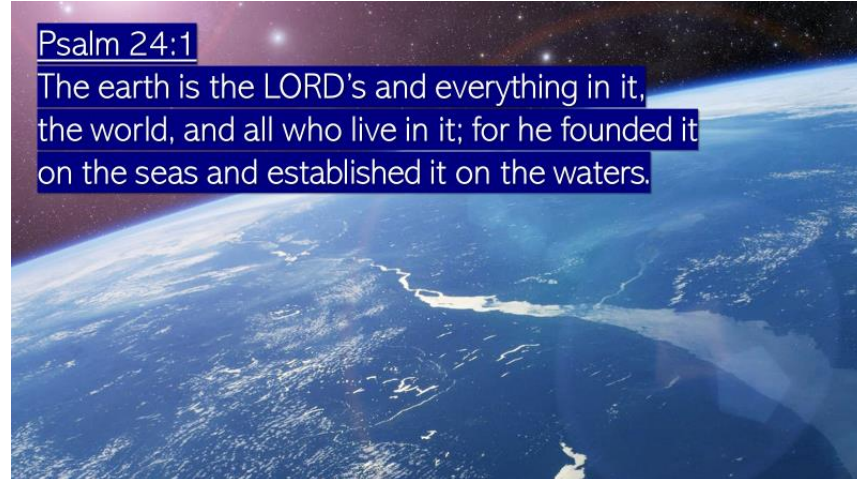
Throughout history... humans have experienced conflict and waged war over land.

We've already noted that when Sarai died, Abram purchased land in order to bury her remains.

The Bible provides many examples of such transactions.

The Bible also provides wise counsel on how land is to be sold and bought.

But there is a foundational principal in the Bible that undergirds all matters concerning land.



The earth belongs to the Lord because... he created it.

God holds the deed to the whole earth.... every square meter is his.

And as the owner, God alone has the exclusive right to decide who lives where and when.

This foundational principal – the earth is the LORD's... shaped how Abram's descendants... hundreds of years later... were allotted the land they received when they entered Canaan.



The land was divided into more or less twelve equal parcels.  
Each tribe received their piece via the casting of lots which put the decision as to who received what... into the hands of God.

This foundational principle was also at the heart of a unique practice established by God for Abraham's extended family; a practice no other nation on earth has engaged in.



The Year of Jubilee happened every fifty years.  
It involved a release from indebtedness (Leviticus 25:23-38).  
All prisoners and captives were set free, all slaves were released, all debts were forgiven, and all property was returned to its original owners.

At the heart of Jubilee was the recognition that the earth is the LORD's and that he is a merciful, generous and compassionate God, who leads his people to be like him in all their dealings with one another.

The Jubilee also presented a beautiful picture of the New Testament themes of redemption and forgiveness. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jubilee.html>

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the early Christians went into their world to announce the good news of salvation.  
The apostle Paul went to the city of Athens.  
There as he preached the good news of Jesus.

As he did so, he spoke of this foundational principle, and described it as a means of grace, intended by God to convince people to seek after him, to reach out to him that they might find him.



Acts 17:24-27:

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth... He is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him...

This is a challenging truth for contemporary sensibilities to hear... that the earth belongs to the Lord and that ultimately, he decides who lives where and when. It is equally challenging to read that the Canaanites ultimately lost their place in the land of Canaan... because of their sin.

But this is what God told Abram when he spoke with him in Genesis 15...

Genesis 15:13-16

Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that for **four hundred years** your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. **In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.**"

God in mercy, delayed giving the land of Canaan to Abram's descendants... in order to give to the Canaanite peoples... opportunity to turn away from their sin and turn to God.

They were given four hundred years of opportunity!

What a different story it would have been if they had repented and turned to God!

The story of Abram and Sarai is a story saturated by the grace of God, and his faithfulness to keep the promise he made in the garden of Eden... that a Rescuer would come into the world to save.

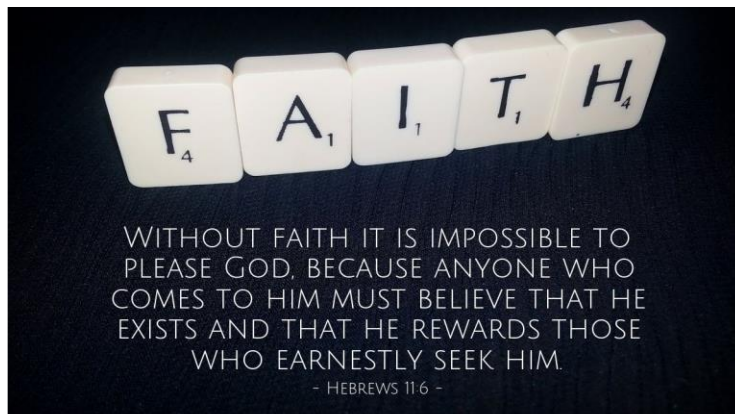
Look again at our passage.

**Genesis 12:6-7**

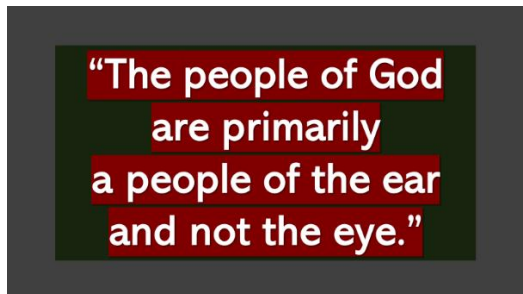
**Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land."**

Allen Ross writes, "The LORD appeared to Abram ... once he was in the land."  
p.266

The LORD appeared... not before Abram arrived... but only after he was there.  
This confirms two things.  
Faith in God obeys God.  
And the second... God rewards those who act in faith of him.



This teaches us as Bruce Waltke wrote... that



p.209



Without question, it is significant that God appeared to Abram.  
For Abram... this experience would have been beyond incredible.  
But do you realize that God only appeared to Abram... three times... three times after he arrived in Canaan?

Genesis 12:7

The LORD appeared to Abram  
(at the great tree of Moreh) and said...

Genesis 17:1

The LORD appeared to Abram  
(when he was ninety-nine years old) and said...

Genesis 18:1

The LORD appeared to Abraham  
near the great trees of Mamre...

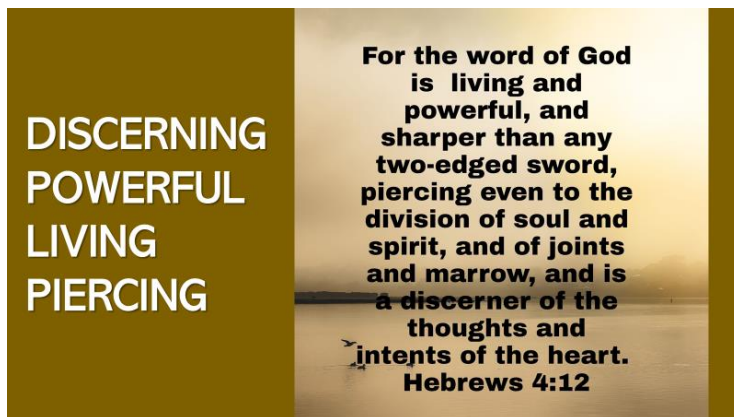
What we learn here is that God reveals himself to be a God who primarily communicates verbally.  
The words which God speaks... carry great weight and are powerful because of who God is.  
The words which God speaks... shape the lives of those who follow him.

This is confirmed by what Jesus said when he was tempted by the devil...

Jesus answered,  
“It is written:  
‘Man shall not  
live on bread  
alone, but on  
every word that  
comes from the  
mouth of  
God.’ ”

Matthew 4:4 NIV

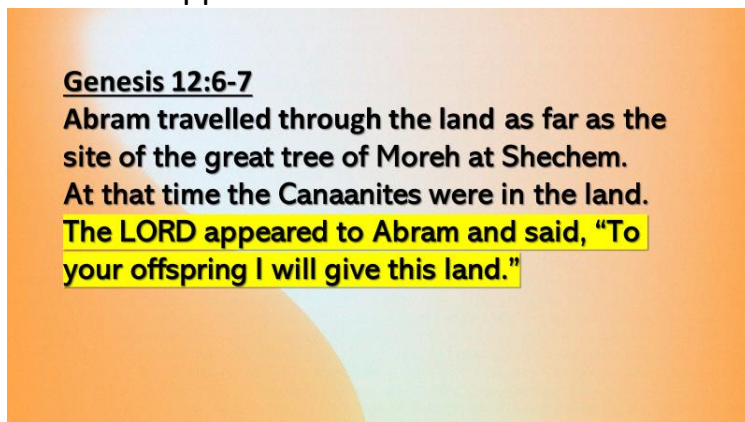
For Jesus' followers...



...our spiritual lives are nourished and sustained by the living, powerful, piercing, discerning words spoken by God.

**The words of God are our food.**

The LORD appeared to Abram... at Shechem at the great tree of Moreh...



... at a place where the people of the land worshiped their idols.

In that day and time, people believed that various gods held power in different geographical places over the people who lived there.

They believed these so-called gods were in control of the weather, the land and the crops that grew there.

They further believed it was their responsibility to seek the favor of these gods.

Do you see what God did at Moreh?

He appeared to Abram... at a place where the so-called gods of the land were worshiped... and declared... his authority over Canaan.

God said to Abram...I will give this land to your offspring.

God said this because the land was his to give.

The land of Canaan did not belong to the Canaanite gods.

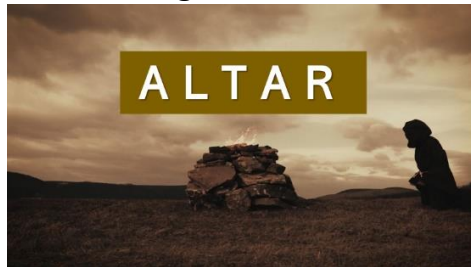
What Abram did in response to God's appearing and the promise made to him, teaches us how we too are to respond to God.

Look again at our passage.

**Genesis 12:6-7**

Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

The building of an altar to the LORD was an act of worship that assumes sacrifice.



Time and effort were sacrificed to God as the altar was built. But so was the gift which was presented upon the altar.

Whether it was in the OT or NT, the worship of God has always been costly... because he is immensely worthy and deserving of the very best that his people have to give to him.

We today who follow Jesus do not present animals as a sacrifice.

Jesus made such sacrifices obsolete.

Rather we offer to him, as Hebrews 13:15 says...

**Hebrews 13:15-16**

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

... a sacrifice of praise... and the doing of good and the sharing with others... in his name and for his sake.



As it was for Abram, so it is for us.



We too worship God extravagantly ... with our time, effort and energy.

Look again at our passage.

**Genesis 12:6-8**

Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

From there he went toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.





In that place between Bethel and Ai, in addition to building an altar, Abram and Sarai called upon the name of the LORD.

What does that mean?

It wasn't just that they spoke out loud God's name – Yahweh.

But as they sacrificed to God... they verbally expressed their faith in the One they followed.

For Abram and his descendants, a name spoke of a person's attributes, qualities and their activities.

As did Abram and Saria, so do we.

In our worship of God...

We praise God... for who he is –

- The Father, Son and Spirit
- The One who is our King
- Our greatest Treasure
- His love is higher than the heavens
- His grace beyond what we can fathom
- The One who is our Savior
- The One who rose from the dead

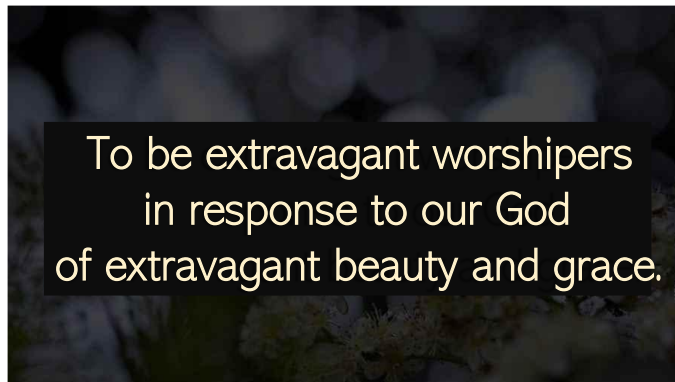
We express to him our gratitude... for what he has done –

- The One who died to set us free
- The One who is always with us, even in the dark
- The One who speaks to us
- The One who is our strong defender

And we breathe out our prayers to him... in confidence that God hears and answers because he is good, and his love endures forever.

Allen Ross writes, and with this I conclude:

Those who truly believe the Word of the Lord forsake everything to become worshipers of him... who serve with him... in blessing the world. p.268



May this local church be a people who worship extravagantly in response to the beauty and grace of our God who has called us to follow him.