

Genesis 14B (2011)

An honest man is being tailgated by a stressed-out woman on a busy boulevard. Suddenly, the light turns yellow, just in front of him. He does the honest thing, and stops at the crosswalk, even though he could have beaten the red light by accelerating through the intersection.

The tailgating woman hits the roof, and the horn, screaming in frustration as she misses her chance to get through the intersection with him.

As she is still in mid-rant, she hears a tap on her window and looks up into the face of a very serious police officer. The officer orders her to exit her car with her hands up. He takes her to the police station where she is searched, fingerprinted, photographed, and placed in a cell.

After a couple of hours, a policeman approaches the cell and opens the door. She is escorted back to the booking desk where the arresting officer is waiting with her personal effects. He says, "I'm very sorry for this mistake. You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, making obscene gestures to the car in front, and cussing a blue streak at him. I noticed the 'Choose Life' license plate holder, the 'What Would Jesus Do' bumper sticker, the 'Follow Me to Sunday School' bumper sticker, and the chrome plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk. So naturally, I assumed you had stolen the car."

- We broadcast our identity to the world, whether for better or worse
 - And the world expects us to act accordingly
 - Abram had gained a reputation, one that led the city of Sodom to look to him for rescue
 - Though they themselves followed a different course and held different values
 - Nevertheless, they know our values, sometimes better than we do
 - And in times of distress, we can become their refuge
 - Often God will use us in that way to reach the lost
 - So what a terrible shame it is when we fail to live up to that distinction

- In times when we choose to blend in rather than stand out, as Lot chose in Sodom, we forfeit our credibility in claiming to have better answers and a better hope than the world
 - This explains why the attack of the four northern kings has left Lot a captive with the rest of Sodom while Abram is called to provide rescue
 - And this story is also the second challenge Abram will face for having brought Lot with him against God's wishes
 - There will be a total of three such crises for Abram in dealing with Lot
 - But along the way God uses these three moments to grow Abram and prepare him for greater things to come
- Last week we watched as the refugee found Abram and told him of the city's capture
 - The sense of v.13 was that the refugee wanted Abram to intervene to assist the city, based on the assumption that Abram would help Lot
 - And this is precisely what Abram will do

[Gen. 14:14](#) When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

[Gen. 14:15](#) He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.

[Gen. 14:16](#) He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.

- Even though Lot has caused his fair share of trouble, he's still family
 - So Abram doesn't hesitate to step in and bring Lot back
- In fact, we should be eternally thankful that Abram responds in this way, because his behavior forms a picture of our Father's response to His children
 - Lot is a righteous man by faith, according to New Testament commentary
 - And Abram can be understood to be a man who pictures our father in Heaven

- Therefore, in this account, we see a beautiful picture of the Father in hot pursuit of His relatives, His children
 - Even when we are faithless, Paul teaches, God remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself
 - Denying Himself refers to the indwelling of God's Spirit in each of His children
 - God can't forsake us because His Spirit lives in us
 - So when we are carried away by the world's temptations or the enemy's schemes, the love of the Father for His children compels Him to pursue us
 - And we can take great comfort knowing that He is far stronger than the world or the enemy
- In this case, Abram pursues Lot as far as Dan, Moses says
 - This is a long pursuit, about 125 miles
 - Moses says it takes him as far as Dan
 - Dan refers to the northern-most city of Israel, formerly called Laish
 - The city didn't gain the name Dan until long after Moses' death
 - So we wonder how did Moses know to identify the place as the land of Dan?
 - Likely this reference changed by a later scribe
 - Moses may have written Laish
 - And after it became Dan, the name was changed in Scripture
- Abram's pursuit is also a wonderful picture of how far the Lord will go to pursue us
 - And how long the pursuit can last
 - Can you imagine how Lot was feeling during this time?

- Did he wonder if Abram was coming? Did he assume they had gone so far away that he had given up hope of rescue?
- This is a good story to remember in moments when praying for someone we care about who has been carried away by the world
 - While we wonder if that person has gone so far that they are beyond rescue, remember how things must have appeared to Lot
 - And all the while, Abram was coming and getting closer
 - And in the middle of the night, when things were darkest, the Father appears and defeats the enemy
- Abram wins the victory, and it's remarkable for two reasons
 - First, Abram takes a force of 318 men, all born in his household and goes in pursuit
 - We don't have a number in Scripture for the size of the invading army
 - But it's a safe assumption that the four invading kings would have brought many times more men to defeat five kingdoms
 - And based on how easily they seemed to have conquered the land, we can safely assume they had thousands of men
 - So it's surprising, even unbelievable, that Abram could take a mere 318 men, trained in his house, not part of a professional fighting force, and defeat this army
 - Secondly, Abram takes this hugely disadvantaged force and divides it, according to v.15
 - Conventional military thinking says you never divide a smaller force, since it only weakens you further
 - But Abram decides to divide his forces anyway and attack at night
 - Leading to a rout, driving them another 40 miles past Damascus

- Some have wondered why Abram pursues them so far
 - The only logical reason is that he hadn't yet rescued Lot
 - He may have put the armies on the run, but until he had what he wanted, he kept fighting and pursuing
- Here's another encouraging parallel to the way our Father fights for His children
 - He fights and pursues until He has reclaimed what belongs to Himself
 - Like the story of the prodigal son, God will only be content when His children are at home in His company, at His table
 - The fact that Abram fights with only 318 men and then divides them yet still manages to rout this powerful army is amazing...in fact, it's a miracle
 - God has clearly delivered this victory into Abram's hands
 - And we can be sure that Abram knows that God won this victory
 - Because the next thing we find in the passage is Abram displaying thanks to God

[Gen. 14:17](#) Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

[Gen. 14:18](#) And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.

- This point in the story becomes a comparison between two kings
 - More specifically, Moses records how Abram responds differently to two kings in the land of Canaan
 - First as Abram is returning to his home, he is met by the new king of Sodom
 - The old king had fallen into the tar pits and died
 - So there is a new man claiming authority over the city of Sodom

- Only there's a problem...the city of Sodom has no people
- So claiming to be king over an empty city doesn't hold much appeal does it?
- So the king travels about 80 miles north to meet up with Abram and ask for the people
 - The valley he finds Abram in is the valley between the old city of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives
 - The king's request was a bold request, since Abram had every right to keep everything he had gained in the battle
 - He may have been rich already, but this booty would have undoubtedly made him the most powerful man in Canaan
- This explains why the king traveled so far
 - He didn't expect Abram to bring them back to Sodom
- Secondly, Abram is met by the king of Salem
 - Salem is an ancient word for peace and the original name of Jerusalem

Psa. 76:1 God is known in Judah;
His name is great in Israel.

Psa. 76:2 His tabernacle is in Salem;
His dwelling place also is in Zion.

- So this man is the King of the city of Salem, ancient Jerusalem
- His name is Melchizedek, which is an ancient Jebusite name meaning king of righteousness
- He's also described as a priest of the Most High God, the first mention of priest in the Bible
 - And he brings Abram bread and wine
- Before we examine the contrast between the two kings, I want to consider who this king is

- The letter to the Hebrews provides the definitive commentary on Melchizedek in Hebrews 7

[Heb. 7:1](#) For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, [Heb. 7:2](#) to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.

[Heb. 7:3](#) Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

- The writer notes that he's the first priest mentioned in Scripture
 - And in fact, he's so important that Abram chooses to tithe to him
 - Which tells us that Abram saw this man as a greater authority in matters of God
 - He was Abram's priest, his intercessor
 - Abram wasn't the only one in the land who knew and followed the Living God
 - Abram wasn't even the most important
 - God had selected a man, a king, to serve as His priest for the sake of Abram
- Most interestingly, the writer of Hebrews notes that Moses never gives Melchizedek a genealogy
 - Think about how strange that is for Moses and for Genesis
 - Up til now, every important character in the line of the seed has been shown in the genealogies somewhere
 - It's been so important for Moses to show us how everything proceeds from the events of the Garden
 - Yet here's a significant event, the first priest of God, and he has no genealogy in Genesis
 - He appears here and then just as quickly he disappears
 - He never appears in any of those 30,000 ft chapters of begats and deaths

- It's as if he has no beginning and no end
- The writer of Hebrews tells us that Melchizedek was provided in Genesis as a type or picture of Christ
 - He was a real man, a Jebusite king of the city of Salem whom God used as a priest in his day
 - But in the way Moses tells the story of Melchizedek, we receive a beautiful picture of Christ
- Christ, like Melchizedek has no beginning, no end
 - He is also both Priest and King
 - He is the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace
 - And as Hebrews taught, he proves that a greater priesthood predated even the one of the Mosaic Law
 - The Jewish priesthood of the Law came after Melchizedek
 - And the writer of Hebrews uses this fact to argue that the Melchizedek priesthood is a greater priesthood than the one created in the Law of Moses
 - Psalm 110 tells us that this is the priesthood of Jesus

**Psa. 110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind,
"You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek."**

- Jesus is not a priest under the Law of Moses
 - In fact, under the Law a priest cannot also be a king
- So Jesus received His right to intercede on our behalf on a greater priesthood
 - He was made a priest by the oath of God the Father
 - And He will not change His mind
 - And so the priesthood of Jesus supercedes and replaces any earthly form of priesthood
 - This is why we can now approach God boldly by way of our High Priest, Jesus Christ

- We don't go through a man or anyone calling themselves a priest
- In fact, the Bible says that we are all priests, in the sense that we are ministers to God in our spiritual service
- Back to our two kings, we have Abram greeted by two kings

[Gen. 14:19](#) He blessed him and said,
 "Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
 Possessor of heaven and earth;

[Gen. 14:20](#) And blessed be God Most High,
 Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."
 He gave him a tenth of all.

[Gen. 14:21](#) The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself."

[Gen. 14:22](#) Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth,

[Gen. 14:23](#) that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.'

[Gen. 14:24](#) "I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share."

- Which one will Abram choose to honor?
 - On one hand Abram has the king of Sodom, a poster child for the kind of kingdom the world offers
 - But ironically, he's a king without subjects
 - And he offers Abram the chance for great wealth in exchange for the people
 - But Abram is more worried about his testimony, his witness
 - He had just been blessed by God's High Priest and acknowledged that God was the One blessing Abram
 - And now this pretender to the throne of Sodom wanted to assume responsibility for making Abram rich
- Abram responds in rebuke
 - He says I have sworn to now take anything from Sodom

- So Abram says you take it all, except for what was already consumed by his men, a fair wage for the work of the rescue
- And Abram's allies are allowed to take what they want
- But Abram takes nothing
- So Abram selects Melchizedek
- Finally let's put ourselves in Lot's shoes
 - Thinking of all the trouble he put his Uncle in
 - But now he sees his Uncle saying no to the King of the city is aspired to be a part of
 - Abram would rather the world know Whom was blessing him
 - Whereas Lot's testimony is he would rather have the city than have the world know who was his God
- Oh that we could each make Abram's choice rather than Lot's