



DATE: October 5, 1008

TEXT: Genesis 18:1-6

TITLE: "Genesis XIII: Encountering God"

In this sermon we are looking at two chapters of Genesis.... chapters 18 and 19. We are continuing to look at the life of Abraham. In these 2 chapters Abraham encounters the Lord and walks with Him between Mamre and Sodom and Gomorrah. As Abraham is walking with the angels and the Lord three events take place. First, is the promise of the Lord to Abraham and Sarah that she would have a son. Second is a conversation Abraham has with the Lord regarding Sodom and Gomorrah. Do you remember the story? God promises to destroy the cities because of their unrighteousness. Abraham begins to bargain with the Lord. "If there are 50 righteous people will you spare the cities?" God agreed. Then Abraham asked about 45.. Then 40.... then 30... then 20 and finally 10. The Lord agreed that if there were 10 righteous people in the cities he would not destroy them. How many were there? Between 0 and 3. Lot and his two daughters and if you read chapter 19 you discover that even Lot and his daughters had been totally corrupted by the unrighteousness.

What I want to do this morning is look at these stories and tell us what they teach us about our Lord. I will share 4 lessons.

Lesson # 1 God is a mystery. *Genesis 18:1,2*

The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby.

Who were these three men? Were they great prophets? Were they 3 angels? Were they 3 angels and the Lord? Let me say... we don't know. I tend to believe the last option. Later we see Abraham talking to the Lord and 2 of the men going to Sodom. For the last few weeks we have been looking at unanswered questions. Two weeks it was concerning Melchizedek. The truth is this.... God is a mystery. God will never be fully understood.

The amazing truth is this... we have a God who has revealed Himself. We see that truth in this story. We see that truth on every page of the Bible. We especially see that truth in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. God reveals Himself.... but we must never think we understand God. Only a small part of God is revealed to His creation.

We must be very, very careful that we do not make God fit the image we are comfortable

with. We must become completely comfortable with God. He is a mystery.

Lesson # 2 God blesses His children. There is this wonderful story of God promising that Abraham would be the father of a son. The interchange between God and Abraham and Sarah is wonderful. First you have this conversation...(Genesis 18:9-10)

"Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said. Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

The Lord is having this conversation with Abraham. He asks "where is your wife?" Now understand this...The Lord can see Sarah. She is behind Abraham semi-hiding in the entranceway. The lesson is this ... "all women eavesdrop so never trust a woman." No! That's not the lesson.... its just God's sense of humor.

But then we have this conversation between God and Abraham...(Genesis 18:13,14)

Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD ? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."

Abraham promised a miracle. Sarah was "advanced in age" and had been unable to have children all her life. She really did not believe God. But God says **"is anything too hard for**

the Lord?" This is the foundational statement for all Christians. This is the saying we should put on our refrigerators. We have a God who hears each and every one of our prayers. We have a God who is committed to the love and joy of His children. We have a God who does miracles in our lives. Am I saying God will answer all your prayers the way you desire them to be answered? Of course not.. That would not be healthy for us. Am I saying Christians will not go through hard times... at times even tragic times? Of course not... the experience of every person here disproves that statement. What I am saying is God does indeed answer our prayers and God does indeed guide our lives and God does indeed bring miracles in our lives... according to His purpose and according to His love. Jesus gives us these words of assurance

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (John 14: 1-3)

Notice what these words of Jesus are promising. They are not promising freedom from death. We will die. Sometimes we will die of heart failure... sometimes we will die of cancer... sometimes we will die in an accident... sometimes we will die as children... sometimes we will die

tragically. The promise is this.... death is moving into the house of the Lord. Death is getting closer to the Lord. Again, don't try to squeeze God into a promise he did not make. So many get mad at God because he doesn't answer a prayer to spare a loved one. That is not a promise of God.... and that is a selfish prayer when you understand the true promise of God that death is the victory of God for the believer. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. He does indeed do miracles in our lives... we just need eyes to see them.

Finally **Lesson # 3** God destroys unrighteousness. This is a hard lesson. *Genesis 19:24ff*

24 Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the LORD out of the heavens. 25 Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land. 26 But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. 27 Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the LORD. 28 He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace. 29 So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.

Sin and unrighteousness is punished. Sodom and Gomorrah had been completely corrupted. There was no worship of God. The men who had visited Lot in Sodom had been surrounded by men who desired them sexually. There was greed, there was evil. God destroyed the cities saving only lot and his two daughters.

Now this is a difficult concept for us to grasp. It, truthfully is not part of the politically correct image of God in this 21st century. But it is the picture of God revealed again and again in scripture. God is patient... but his patience is not unending. God is love... but he does not force Himself on someone who desire to be his or her own god. God acts to encounter us... but He does not force himself on people who do not desire an encounter. God is the judge. If a person rejects him. If a person chooses a path away from Him... he allows that path to end in separation from Him. And at times.. The evil of the world is so great... He acts to destroy the evil before the evil overwhelms the entire world.

Again let me say this..... we have a God who loves and cares for his children. Who are the children of God? Jesus answers that question in *John 1:12*

12Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

This morning we come to the table of the Lord. Communion is the opportunity to once again declare that we are the children of God. Communion is the opportunity to once again say.... Jesus you are my Lord.... Jesus, as Abraham walked with you 4000 years ago, I will walk

with you today..... Jesus I believe in miracles in my life, miracles brought by your power and

your love. Jesus I am you child.

AMEN