

# Worship

July 9, 2023

10:00 a.m.

St. Andrew's, Mooretown

Call to worship: Psalm 24:1-2

Hymn: #332 "O Lord my God"

**O Lord my God! when I in awesome wonder  
consider all the worlds thy hands have made,  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
thy power throughout the universe displayed,  
*then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,  
How great thou art!  
how great thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,  
How great thou art!  
how great thou art!***

**When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,  
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur  
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze,  
*then sings my soul ...***

**And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,  
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,  
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
he bled and died to take away my sin,  
*then sings my soul ...***

**When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!  
Then I shall bow in humble adoration,  
and there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!  
*Then sings my soul ...***

Opening prayers (adoration, supplication):

You, O God, are overflowing with love,  
infinite in kindness,  
and incomparable in glory.  
There is no other like you in all our imagining.  
Your presence breaks into our lives in the beauty of summer  
and refreshes us like a gentle breeze breath on a still day.  
You renew us to meet life's changes and challenges.  
In this time of worship,  
we offer thanks in our prayers,  
praise from our hearts,

and honor with our lives,  
to you, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,  
this day and every day, now and always.

**Confession (unison)**

**Merciful God,**

**we confess that we have  
sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed.**

**Thinking ourselves wise,**

**we have not honoured you as God,  
we have resisted believing in you,  
we have refused to obey your Word,  
we have failed to trust your gospel,  
your grace, and your mercy.**

**Forgive what we have been,**

**amend what we are,**

**and direct what we shall be,**

**so that we may delight in your will**

**and walk in your ways.**

**to the glory of your holy name.**

**Amen.**

Assurance of God's grace and mercy: Psalm 32:1, 2, 11; John 3:16

Scripture: Romans 4:1-25

### Sharing the faith of Abraham

Paul wrote this letter to a mixed audience in Rome. They were all Christians. In fact, in his introductory remarks he applauded their public faith: “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world.”<sup>1</sup> They believed God is real, good, and able. They believed Jesus of Nazareth is His Son, the Messiah, who was crucified for the forgiveness of sin and resurrected, bodily, from the dead. However, there was friction within the church. The church in Rome was comprised of Jewish believers and Gentile believers. The Gentile Christians believed that Jesus made obsolete all of the teachings of the Old Testament covenants whereas the Jewish Christians believed that because God had made the covenant first with their ancestors, the covenants still hold. Which meant that to be in a right relationship with God, to be part of His holy family, to be saved, one must show one’s faith by the practices of the law. Such as, for men, circumcision.

Paul raised the example of Abraham to demonstrate that both sides are right. The covenants still stand. The law still applies. But what we must understand is that the law came into being to help the redeemed faithful live faithfully, not to make them righteous.

When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, it wasn’t to save the people but because the people had been saved. Having been set free from their slavery, God then gave them teachings to help them continue living as God’s redeemed, and holy, family.

Using Abraham as his example, Paul’s argument was quite simple. Abraham was reckoned righteous; in other words, in God’s eyes, Abraham was fully acceptable to live in communion with God, long before any law, or any physical practice such as circumcision were established. When God called Abraham to leave his homeland and wander through what would one day become the homeland of his descendants, when God promised Abraham that he would have as many descendants as the stars, when God entered covenant with Abraham and promised that through Abraham’s family, the entire world would be saved, Abraham was not circumcised.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 1:8

God made this promise when Abraham was 75 years old (Genesis 12.)  
Abraham was circumcised when he was 99 years old (Genesis 17.)

Abraham was reckoned righteous on account of his faith. Circumcision was the physical sign of that faith.

So, Paul's argument was that because God reckoned Abraham as righteous before circumcision, then Abraham became the father of everyone who shares his faith without being circumcised. Also, because he was circumcised, he is the father of everyone who is circumcised and who also shares his faith.

*The purpose was to make [Abraham] the **ancestor** of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, and likewise the **ancestor** of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our **ancestor** Abraham had before he was circumcised. ... He is the father of us all, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations.'*

So, Paul held up Abraham as an exemplar of living in communion with God.

### **The faith of Abraham:**

There are three attributes of Abraham's faith which Paul lifted up to be for us, examples:

**1.** The first was that Abraham was *fully convinced that God was able to do what God had promised.*

God had promised that Abraham and Sarah would become parents of a son. This son would, in turn, become the ancestor of twelve great tribes. These tribes would live in a land of milk and honey and become to the world living beacons of God's glory, grace, and mercy. Thus, the tribes would become the mediators by whom all people of the world could live in God's grace.

**2.** However, there were two problems. The first was that Abraham was old: "... his own body was already as good as dead." The second was that Sarah was unable to bear a child.

The wisdom of our age, as indeed the prevailing wisdom of Abraham's generation, would assert that believing you will become the parents of a great family

when both you and your spouse are unable to conceive and give birth, is complete foolishness!

It was not possible for Abraham and Sarah to have a child naturally.

Nevertheless, rather than directing his trust to his human circumstances, he directed it to God. Contrary to the wisdom of the age, Abraham trusted the divine Word.

Here we have the second attribute of Abraham's faith:

*Hoping against hope, he believed ...*

**3.** So, 1. Abraham was fully convinced that God is able and willing to do what God has promised. And, 2. contrary to the wisdom of the age, and being fully convinced that God is real, good, and able, Abraham chose to trust God's Word despite contrary wisdom.

The third attribute of Abraham's faith is that it wasn't stagnant but

*...he grew strong in his faith **as he gave glory to God.***

In this instance, "giving glory to God" means giving God the credit in a way that helps others see who God is. Publicly acknowledging God's blessing in one's life, giving thanks to God, and honouring God as God.

Abraham was not a perfect man. His faith faltered. Yet, he always returned to God. And, as he exercised the practice of sincerely and publicly crediting God, his trust in God's care and His belief in God's existence and goodness increased. As he continually shone the spotlight back on God, he came to understand in greater depth and broadness, God's presence and grace.

### **The promise extended:**

So, Abraham is an exemplar of faith.

He is also the patriarch of the new salvation-redemption family, consummated in Jesus Christ.

*Now the words, 'It was reckoned to him,' were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.*

God extends the promise to everyone who chooses to share the faith of Abraham.

From her home in the slums of Calcutta, Mother Theresa once observed that the Western World is one of great poverty. She once said that “The spiritual poverty of the Western World is much greater than the physical poverty of our people.” And speaking specifically of the United States of America, she observed that America is among the poorest societies in the world because “America suffers most from the poverty of loneliness.”

As much as the gospel of Jesus Christ gives to us the promise of the sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life, it also gives to us the promise of belonging in the present age. Through Christ, whoever shares Abraham’s faith is adopted into the heavenly Father’s family which now encompasses the globe and contains everyone who follows Abraham’s faith in God: being fully convinced that God is able to do what God has promised, hoping against hope, and giving glory to God regardless of our circumstances – whether circumcised or uncircumcised.

For God’s glory, the health of our souls, and the good of our society.

Amen.

Affirmation of faith (The Apostle's Creed)

Receive and bless the offerings

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
praise Him all creatures here below,  
praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts;  
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession with the Lord's Prayer:

God ever creating,

God ever loving,

God ever leading:

We turn to you in uncertain times, trusting in your steadfast love.

Where people are anxious about the future,

where people overwhelmed by their responsibilities,

where people fear conflict or violence in daily life,

Bring peace and hope, we pray,

**And let your kingdom come.**

God of all compassion:

Where people are lonely or isolated, longing for love,

where people are trapped in unhealthy relationships,

where people are grieving the loss of someone beloved:

Bring courage and hope, we pray,

**And let your kingdom come.**

God of tender strength:

Where people feel pain in their bodies, in minds or spirits,

where illness has eroded hope.

and where desperation for help fills each day:

Bring healing and hope, we pray,

**And let your kingdom come.**

God of trustworthy truth:

Where leaders work to guide communities to renewed life,

where individuals strive to care for the earth and its vulnerable inhabitants,

and where people stand up against unjust policies or practices:

Bring wisdom and hope, we pray,

**And let your kingdom come.**

God in whom we live and move and have our being:

By your Spirit, tend your promise of new life

amid the current struggles in the world you love.

Where hope flickers, reignite its power;

Shine the light of Christ's love into each life and renew our trust in you

as we pray together in the words that Jesus taught us:

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn: #665 "Lord Jesus, you shall be my song"**

**Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey;  
I'll tell everybody about you wherever I go:  
for our life and our peace and our love is yourself.  
Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey.**

**Lord Jesus, I'll praise you as long as I journey.  
May all of my joy be a faithful reflection of you.  
May the earth and the sea and the sky join my song.  
Lord Jesus, I'll praise you as long as I journey,**

**As long as I live, Jesus, make me your servant,  
to carry your cross and to share all your burdens and tears.  
For you saved me by giving your body and blood.  
As long as I live, Jesus make me your servant.**

**I fear in the dark and the doubt of my journey;  
but courage will come with the sound of your steps by my side.  
And with all of the family you saved by your love,  
we'll sing to your dawn at the end of our journey.**

Benediction