

Genesis 12:1-9

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[0:00] It's on page 8. We're continuing our series in Genesis. I think we stopped back in November. We're going to pick it up just for the next few weeks. We're going to be looking at Genesis 12 and 13.

But particularly today, I want us to just look at the first three verses of chapter 12. Homesickness, it's a terrible feeling, isn't it?

When you're far from home and things just aren't right and nothing really will fix it except just being back home.

Bethany and I, we really felt that when we lived in America for four years. We would spend our nights on YouTube watching people eat British food, just watching people go to Gregg's.

That was how we filled our time. And we'd watch this documentary on Eddie Stobart lorries. They're based in Carlisle. It was really good.

[1:00] But that's what we needed. And we would do all that just to deal with this homesickness. That longing to be back in your country with the family you belong to and with the people you love.

And just think about homesickness for a second. What is that feeling? What are we longing for when we're homesick? We are desperate to belong again.

Belong to our country. Belong to our family. Belong to the place where we know we're safe. But that need to belong, it's not just for those who are far from home.

No, you actually see this need to belong in everyone. Lying deep in the heart of all of us.

It's this inescapable need to belong. You see it all around us. People are lonely, aren't they? People are lost. People are directionless.

[2:04] People are in a darkness and desperate just to belong somewhere. Belong to a place and a people and somewhere where they are loved.

So it's no surprise young men are so quick to join gangs, aren't they? It's no surprise as the world is getting more divided. It's also getting more focused on identity.

We're looking for groups to belong to. We are attempting to find some sense of belonging. And what is that need? It's this universal homesickness inside of us.

We know we belong and so we have this need. And you might even be particularly feeling that right now. Well, Genesis shows us the reason why we feel all that.

We need to belong because we are made to belong. Think about how humanity was created. We were made to be one people.

[3:14] God's one humanity. Perfectly united. All belonging to one people. We were made to be together in one place.

Our home. It was the Garden of Eden, wasn't it? And from there, the whole world was meant to be our home. And we are made to belong to God.

Under his love and his care and his safety and his presence and his blessing. Our people, our home, our God.

That's what we are made for. That is what is in the very structure of being human. We truly belonged. But what happened?

We destroyed everything. Sin divided us. Now a broken family. We were sent out of the Garden, wandering nomads east of Eden.

[4:10] And we were sent out of God's presence. The one we were made to belong to. And so what are we all left with this side of Eden?

No home. No people. No God. No belonging. Just this universal homesickness. And that, that is the curse of this world.

As we feel that lost loneliness, we are feeling the curse of this world. And it's there in all of us. Yes, we have family. Yes, we can make friends.

And yes, we can buy a house and make a home. But this world just isn't right. It's still fractured. We are still so lost. And we are needing to belong to something bigger.

The weight of the curse, it just presses down on all of us. And so that need to belong will always be there this side of Eden.

[5:15] Because we aren't back in Eden. We aren't back with God. And that curse, that is exactly what God promises to deal with.

God's big plan for the world is to take a lost and broken people and make us truly belong to what we were made for. And here in Genesis 12, we are seeing God announce that very plan.

God's big plan to fix the curse of this world. And we see here, God is doing this in a very special way. God is fixing the world by calling one man.

And from him, God promises to start a new family. And it's a family you can belong to. And so while we are cursed and broken and needing to belong, we see today, God has promised to bless the world.

And it's my first point today. God has promised to bless the world. This passage we have in front of us, particularly these first three verses of chapter 12, It can't be overstated how important these verses are.

[6:35] This is one of those key pivotal moments in the Bible that sets the course of history forever. God is finally laying out his plan to save the world.

One of my favourite films, it's a Christmas film, it's Home Alone. I love it. I watch it every Christmas, Home Alone 1 and 2. And in Home Alone 1, it's about Kevin McAllister.

He's a boy that's left home alone, obviously. And burglars try to break into his house. And he has to protect his home. And there's this pivotal scene in the film where Kevin finds out the burglars are coming.

And so he decides, right, I can't let this happen. I have a plan. I'm going to save my house. And then the dramatic music kicks in. And it cuts to Kevin clearing the table in his house, laying out a map of his house.

And at the top of the map, it says, Battle Plan. And on it, you see all of Kevin's plan on it, all the traps and the inventions, all the details of how exactly he's going to stop the burglars and save his house.

[7:43] Well, that's what's going on here in Genesis 12. So far, God has said he's going to save the world. Genesis 3, he said he's going to save his house and fix this curse by sending a serpent crusher through a family, someone to defeat Satan, end evil.

But the details are unclear. So far, it's been like Kevin saying he's going to save his house. But we don't know how. Well, here in Genesis 12, this is God clearing the table and laying out the battle plan.

Finally, here are the details of how exactly God is going to save his house, this whole cursed world. And how? Well, God doesn't mess around.

We are thrown straight into the battle plan. First one. Now the Lord said to Abraham, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

And I will make of you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. And him who dishonors you, I will curse.

[8:53] And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. First, this is the plan. It's a promise. And look what this promise involves.

Three big things. God promises Abraham a land. Do you see? Go to the land I will show you. And he promises a nation.

From you will come a whole great nation of people. And third, God promises to bless Abraham. Do you see?

I will bless you. And that means God is going to show a particular favor to this family. This is where God is going to set his focus, his love, his care, his goodness, his presence.

In essence, God is saying, you will belong to me again. You will be a people. And you will be my people.

[9:57] And look what this blessing includes. Do you see? I will make your name great. So your name is your fame. It's your reputation. And God promises he's going to make it great.

So there are big names in the history books, aren't there? There's Alexander the Great. Napoleon. Genghis Khan. Many people that have strived for greatness.

Well, God promises something beyond the history books here. It's with Abraham. This is where real greatness will lie. And it won't just be Abraham alone, did you see?

No. Abraham is going to be a vessel through which other people will be blessed. Verse 3. I will bless those who bless you.

And him who dishonors you, I will curse. Those who are with Abraham on his side, God will bless as well. And those who aren't, God will curse.

[11:00] And who is this? This isn't just a few people. No, this promise is global. Verse 3. In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

This is how you can sum up the plan on the table. God promises a people in a place with God's blessing. This plan is how God is going to save the world.

And why these three things? Well, do these three things ring any bells? This is the answer to the curse. This is the answer to our inescapable need to belong.

To a lonely, scattered world, God says, I promise to make a new family. To a world cast out of the garden, God says, I'm going to give you a new home.

And to a world heavy under the curse, God says, I'm going to bless you. And so this moment here in Genesis 12, this is a seismic moment in the Bible.

[12:09] In all history, in fact. It can't be overstated how important this promise is. This changes the course of everything. God lays out the battle plan and says, I am going to reverse the curse of this world and turn it into blessing.

And you can even see that in how many times bless is mentioned in these verses. Did you count or can you count? So up until now, God has used the word curse five times.

From Genesis 1 to 11, five curses. And now, how many times does he promise to bless? Five times. Curse, curse, curse, curse, curse.

And now, bless, bless, bless, bless, bless. This is the plan to restore the world. God is reversing the curse.

And so God is announcing here what is needed to fix this world. This lostness, this loneliness, this homesickness, this fractured and broken world.

[13:16] It is crying out for help. You might be crying out for help right now. And this promise is showing us what we really need. We are needing God.

We are desperately needing to be back with God under his blessing and being his people. And here in Genesis 12, this is exactly what God is doing.

God is planning to restore the world to how it was meant to be, how we are designed to be, so that we can belong again. And this is why this moment is just so huge in the timeline of history.

To a world plunged into sin, an undeserving world plunged into sin, God isn't promising to flood the world with water anymore. No, he's now promising to flood this world with his blessing.

And how will this blessing come? It's not out of thin air. It's not just going to magically appear. No, this blessing, it is coming through Abraham and his offspring.

[14:28] And it's my second point today. God has promised to bless the world through Abraham and his offspring. Did you notice this promise? It is for the whole world.

Blessing will come to all the families of the earth. But the promise, it isn't directed to the whole earth, is it? It's directed toward Abraham. Look at the language. I will show you a land, Abraham. I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you, and in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. The answer to this universal homesickness, it's going to be not anywhere, but it's going to be in this man.

God is starting a family filled with blessing, and Abraham's going to be at the top of that family tree. And so, connected to Abraham, this blessing will also come through his family.

Look at verse 7. Skip ahead to verse 7. Then the Lord appeared to Abraham and said, to your offspring, I will give this land. This blessing, it's going to come through his offspring.

[15:44] There's a river in North London called the New River. You might have heard of it. It's not an impressive river. Called the New River. And it flows from outside of London, from the Hertfordshire area.

And it flows down into London, into the center of London. But the New River, it wasn't always there. In the 1600s, there was no fresh water in London.

It was all just kind of dirty, polluted water. And so, they dug a new river, the New River, good name, and they dug it from outside of London all the way to the city center to bring fresh water into the city. This one fresh stream of water into a contaminated city. And that's just like Abraham. He and his family is the stream through which this polluted world is going to be flood with blessing.

Restored again. Here, in God's family, with God's blessing, this is where we are going to belong again. And so, God has promised to bless this world. And it's through Abraham and his offspring.

[16:54] And so, as God spreads out his battle plan on the table, this is what we all need to pay very close attention to. If we are to find any relief from this cursed world, if we are to find any fresh water in this polluted life, any true belonging, any blessing of God at all, there is one place and one place only that we can go to.

We need to be a part of this family. But, who is this family? Who is this offspring we need to come to?

Well, from Abraham does come a nation. It's the nation of Israel. And they do possess a land, verse 5, it's the land of Canaan.

We call it Israel and Palestine today. And God does bless them and dwell with them and make Abraham's name great. But when God says the blessing, the stream, will be found in Abraham's offspring, he's ultimately not talking about a nation.

He's ultimately not talking about a plot of land in the Middle East. No, ultimately, God is talking about one offspring. I want you to listen to Galatians 3.16.

[18:18] Paul preached this a few months ago. Galatians 3.16, it's talking about this exact passage. So, Galatians 3 says this, Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring.

It does not say and to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one, and to your offspring, who is Christ.

As God spreads out the plan, even here in Genesis 12, he is promising blessing will come into this world. The lost will find a home, the lonely will find a family, the homesick will belong again, and all that blessing is going to be found in one man.

The stream isn't found in multiple offsprings, no, it's found in one. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the offspring of Abraham.

He is the stream of blessing in this world. And it's by faith in this offspring that is how you enter the stream of salvation and become a member of this family.

[19:36] Listen to Galatians again. If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. This is what God is doing in Christ.

It's in Christ that God is undoing the curse of this world and bringing in a stream of true blessing into this world. And he's starting a new family.

And he says to a lost and lonely world, you can be a part of this family and you can belong again. And who is invited? It's the whole world.

In Christ, as the gospel goes global, the stream has gone global. It's flooding across the nations and all the families of the earth are being blessed right now.

In fact, this room is a living testament to that. In this room, in our congregation, we have families from across the planet, across the continents, just in this room.

[20:39] And that should be no surprise. That is God fulfilling his promise here in Genesis 12. When God decrees something, it will happen.

And so this plan God lays out on the table, it's actually the promise of Christ and his church. That's my third and final point today. The blessing of God is found in Christ and his church.

If you're here tonight and you're wondering, what is church all about? What's going on here? Well, this promise is going on here.

This is where God is restoring the world, right here. If you are looking for that stream, this is where you find it. This is the family of God that God is forming and blessing.

And so it's here in Christ and in his church, this is where you can come to escape the curse of this world and truly belong again, belong to a people and a family that will last into eternity.

[21:55] There will be some here for whom the idea of a family, it doesn't bring up a sense of belonging. It only brings up painful memories. And you particularly feel the sharpness of this curse, of a homesickness that is constantly there but no home to go to.

Well, the Lord Jesus promises you, come to him and you will find a family that you truly belong to and you will find a home to be a part of and you will find a heavenly father to love you forever.

And so if you are lost and lonely and you cannot escape that feeling that you need to belong, well, this is the home. This is the home that you've been needing all along.

And most importantly, this is where you find the blessing of God. It is by faith in the Lord Jesus that you will come under the care and love and the blessing of God.

And God is calling the whole world, he's calling you. And in this family, this is where names are made great. For those of us in Christ, the church in our lives, it often, it all feels small, doesn't it?

[23:17] Insignificant. Often, it can feel pathetic, can't it? Like our prayers and our ministries are just doing nothing in the history books. But we really need to rethink that.

We need to see what all of this that we're doing here is in the light of this promise. All our serving and our prayers and our conversations and our preaching, it is all a part of God's great plan to restore this world.

In the church, in this family, this is where God is making the name of Christ great. And this does involve the whole world because this promise isn't ultimately about a land in the Middle East.

No, Hebrews 11 tells us Abraham is actually being promised something beyond that. Here in Genesis 12, Abraham is actually being promised a better country, a heavenly one, not just a portion of this planet, but what Adam was intended to have from the start, what is the land that we are going to inherit?

Well, the Lord Jesus tells us, the meek shall inherit the earth. This is God's great plan to restore the world.

[24:41] In Christ, God is undoing the curse, forming a new people, blessing us, and one day when Christ calls us from the grave, we are actually going to have a land.

All of this, God's people in God's place under God's blessing, this promise, it couldn't be bigger.

And how does it all come? It's through the one offspring. All this blessing is only found in the Lord Jesus. Jesus. He's the world's only hope to fix all of this.

So, you don't need to live under the curse of this world any longer. Put your faith in the Lord Jesus and come and belong to the blessing of God.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Thank you.