

“Advent with Abraham: The Burial and Beyond”
Mark 12:18-27; Genesis 25:1-11

Christmas is over. So let’s study a Bible text about death. Sound good?

Actually, Christmas is *not* over. You may have gotten rid of your Tannenbaum. But *Christmastide* is still going for another week!

But, you might say, Advent is over. Yes. No.

Yes, the season of Advent is over. And yes— Advent with Abraham is “over.” But no!

There’s still at least 2 more Advents with Abraham that we haven’t experienced. One of them is coming soon. The other one is coming soon enough. Let’s finish our Advent with Abraham meditations this morning like this:

1. We **HAVE** already experienced “Advent with Abraham.”
2. We **WILL SOON** experience “Advent with Abraham.”
3. We will **ONE DAY** experience “Advent with Abraham.”

1. We **HAVE already** experienced “Advent with Abraham.”

How?

First:

- a. ***God has come to be with us in a miraculous Child, as he did with Abraham.***

Advent is the celebration of God coming to us in Christ. Advent *means* “coming.” As we saw a few weeks ago, we have experienced Advent with Abraham because he received a miracle child, and we have, too. Abraham and Sarah were too old, but Isaac came, just as God promised. Mary and Joseph were too “young,” — Mary was a virgin — and Jesus came, just as God promised.

Isaac was Abraham’s hope and his future. Isaac was the key to all of the rest of God’s incredible promises. And despite how impossible it was, Isaac’s birth to barren Sarah and Alte-Mann Abraham proved that all things are possible with God.

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The Messiah was the person that Israel was waiting for. Their hope and their future, and the key to unlock all of God’s incredible promises. And if you thought it was “impossible” to have a child in your nineties, how impossible is it for God to be born from a virgin teenager? And that’s exactly what Gabriel told her: with God, all things are possible.

Advent for Christians is *always* Advent with Abraham.

Have you experienced Advent with Abraham? Have you received God himself, coming to you in a miracle Child?

How else have we already had Advent with Abraham?

b. God has brought the miracle Child back from the dead.

As we saw last Sunday, Abraham believed that if he gave up his child as a sacrifice, God could raise him from the dead. And that’s exactly what God the Father did with his own Son, Jesus: he gave him up for us all. And then he raised him from the dead.

You’ve experienced Advent with Abraham if you have watched in stunned silence as God took his own Son, the Lamb of God, who was slain for our sins, and raised him from the dead. Have you embraced Jesus, the miracle child, raised from the dead? Then you have already experienced Advent with Abraham.

How else have we already had Advent with Abraham?

c. God has given us the gift of faith to trust him with unfulfilled promises, like he did with Abraham.

We’ve been saying that these are “impossible” things. A child born to a barren woman. To a virgin woman. The “resurrection” of Isaac through the ram caught in the thicket. The resurrection of Jesus from the tomb on the third day. Nobody simply *accepts* these things. They are received by faith.

We need impossible faith to believe such impossible things. But with God, all things are possible.

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And he gives us impossible faith to believe impossible realities. But he gives us this faith— how? By showing us his own faithfulness.

Abraham believed God more and more as God fulfilled his promises. God has come to us in Christ to say “yes” to all of his promises. We have every *reason* to believe.

Friends, if you’re in Christ, trusting God by faith, then you have *already* experienced Advent with Abraham. You’ve received a miracle Child with Abraham. You’ve seen that miracle Child resurrected with Abraham. And you’ve been given the gift of faith and many reasons to believe that the impossible is possible with God, along with Abraham.

2. We **WILL soon** experience “Advent with Abraham.”

If you’re a Christian, you’ve already experienced Advent with Abraham. That’s what the past 4 weeks were all about.

But today’s text tells the story of the death and burial of Abraham. Guess what: you haven’t died yet. But you will, soon. And so you will soon experience an “Advent with Abraham” that you haven’t experienced yet.

Do you have a suspicion that the best joys of this life— a long, good life with all you need and lots more; having your children and grandchildren at your side when you take your last breath; an inheritance to give to them — that all of these joys are “not enough” because, when you’re dead, *you’re dead?*

Then you need to know that, first ...

A. God will gather us to our people like he did with Abraham.

Look at verses 5-6. Abraham’s children gather around him as he is about to die. He gives the inheritance to Isaac—privileges and responsibilities. But he also gives gifts to his other sons. Every wealthy ancient patriarch hoped to be able to experience this: to bless his family, and to pass on his legacy to a son. But Abraham experiences so much more. As his half-blind eyes open for the last time, he gets to see the promised blessing of the whole world pass from his hands into the hands of his miracle son, Isaac.

If you belong to Jesus, you have spiritual children. People that you’ve poured yourself into. You’ve watched them experience their own Advent with Abraham.

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You’ve encouraged them as they’ve grown in the faith of Abraham. And pretty soon, you’re going to open your eyes for the last time. When you do that, you’ll be watching God pass his blessing of the whole world from your hands to the hands of those for whom you’ve been a spiritual mother or father. You’ll have given them gifts that money can’t buy.

Don’t you want to experience this kind of Advent with Abraham when you open your eyes for the last time?

So that’s one Advent with Abraham, coming soon. And another:

B. God will care for our bodies like he did Abraham’s.

Verses 9-10 tell us that Abraham was buried in the cave he had bought from the Hittites. They sold him some land. That’s the only land that Abraham owns in “the Promised Land” — A tomb!

I think that’s wonderful, actually. The Westminster Catechism says that when we die, our **bodies** continue to be united to Christ as they rest in their graves like they’re laying in beds, waiting to be resurrected. Nothing, not even death, can separate *our bodies* from the love of God in Christ.

Advent with Abraham means that we’ll die like Abraham, but God will never leave us—not even our bodies.

And a third way we’ll soon have an Advent with Abraham:

C. God will welcome our spirits into his presence like he did Abraham’s.

Verse 7 says that Abraham was “gathered to his people.” But. The only body lying in the brand new family grave in Palestine is Sarah.

But! As Jesus says, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Abraham is dead, but he’s also alive. His *spirit* is with his God. And that means he has been “gathered to his people” in the presence of God.

Who are his people? Not just Sarah. But Adam and Eve! Abel and Noah! Melchizedek and Lot! And pretty soon, many others are gathered with them: Isaac,

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Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Miriam, Joshua, Deborah, Ruth, Naomi, David, Daniel, Esther.

And Luke 16 says that when we die in Christ, and meet God, it will be Advent with Abraham: we’ll be gathered into the bosom of Abraham. We’ll be as close with our Maker and Savior as Abraham ever was.

3. We will **ONE DAY** experience “Advent with Abraham.”

So, we *have* had our “Advent with Abraham” in the coming of the miracle Child, Jesus. We will *soon* have “Advent with Abraham” when we die. And finally, **one day** we’ll have a great “Advent with Abraham”.

I read the book of Genesis recently, and I noticed something. The first two chapters say, over and over, “and it was good.” Everything God made. Life, on earth, with creation, in our bodies, is *good*.

What line is repeated, though, in Chapter 5? Over and over, instead of “it was good,” we read “and he died.” Generation after generation: “and he died.”

Now look: verse 7 says Abraham lived 170 years. 100 of them he got to live in the land of promise. He died “at a good old age.” This was the best way to die if you’re an ancient Near Easterner. Your children beside you. Your grave picked out and paid for. That’s a joyful way to finish your life, right?

Well, kind of. Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor says: “All joy strives for eternity, because it loses some of its sense if it doesn’t last.”

We know that life in God’s world is good. And we know in our hearts that “He lived, and he died; she lived, and then she died” is *not* good. We want *forever*.

Friends, there’s an Advent that Abraham himself has not yet experienced. And one day, we’ll experience it with him.

When our Lord Jesus returns, our bodies, with Abraham’s, will be raised and glorified, and reunited with our spirits to live in the New Creation with God forever.

Abraham opens his eyes one last time. He sees his sons with the gifts he’s given them. He sees his miracle child Isaac with the blessings and promises of God in his

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hands. Before Abraham is buried, he gets one last look at all the goodness of God. It is good. But then he dies.

Jesus Christ broke the unending chain of “he lived, and then he died. She lived, and then she breathed her last, and died.” Jesus burst forth from the tomb. And he promises one day to break us out of our tombs—Abraham, you, me.

And on that day, all the joy that we feel on our best days will be given back to us. With one difference. It will never end.

Can we live our lives—50 years? 70 years? 90 years?—with the faith of Abraham? Only if we know that our God is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. The God not of the dead, but of the living.