

“Advent with Abraham, Part 2: The Plunder and the Priest”
Hebrews 7:1-7, 17, 21-25; Genesis 14:17-24

Introduction to the passage

What’s going on in our passage?

In Chapter 12, God called Abraham to leave his people, culture, and religion. God promised to bless him and make him a blessing to the nations. But there was a famine, and Abraham had to go to Egypt. While in Egypt, Abraham does some really unfaithful things that endanger his wife. Pharaoh kicks him out, and he heads back to the land of promise. In Chapter 13, Abraham gives his nephew Lot the chance to pick where he wants to settle, and Abraham takes the area that is left over.

Now here in chapter 14: One group of kingdoms attacked another. Lot, Abraham’s nephew, lived in Sodom, who lost the battle, so Lot was taken captive with his wealth and his family.

Abraham went out with his warriors and chased down the winning armies, attacked them, and got back the prisoners of war, the money and wealth, the women, Lot, and his family.

Now we read in chapter 14, beginning with verse 17.

READING

Sermon Introduction

Advent is either a hopeful time, or it’s a countdown to a big let down.

Let me start with a Zurich version of a common illustration. Let’s say that there are two women. Both of them are employed by Credit Suisse. They are not banking executives. They are in charge of cleaning the toilets.

One of these women says “this is the worst job. I can’t keep doing it.” The other woman smiles and hums and even dances a bit while she works.

What’s the difference?

“Advent with Abraham, Part 2: The Plunder and the Priest”
Hebrews 7:1-7, 17, 21-25; Genesis 14:17-24

The first woman is getting paid 15 CHF per hour. The second woman is being paid 15,000 CHF per hour.

One of them won't have enough in their paycheck. The other one is rich and will only get richer.

It all depends on what you expect in the future. It all depends on *Advent*.

Our strange Bible story takes us back to Advent with Abraham. It shows us that

Advent means the end of hoarding

Advent means the beginning of helping and healing

Advent means the mind of heaven

1. Advent means the end of hoarding

Advent means “coming.” For Abraham, Advent means that God has promised to bless him, and to be a blessing through him. Advent for Abraham means that he is trusting that these promises will come true.

With these blessings on the way, Abraham has a very different relationship with wealth and possessions. Advent with Abraham means the end of hoarding. The end of taking and keeping everything for yourself.

Let's look together.

Two different kings come to meet him.

First, verse 17-- the king of Sodom.

Remember, Abraham saved the king of Sodom, who now owes him big time.

Abraham *could* have kept all the plunder—the gold and silver. He could have kept the soldiers. He could have kept the *women*.

“Advent with Abraham, Part 2: The Plunder and the Priest” Hebrews 7:1-7, 17, 21-25; Genesis 14:17-24

But. Abraham does not need to take take take. He doesn't need or want more more more. For Abraham, Advent means the end of hoarding.

So—verse 21—the King of Sodom says, “Abraham, give me my people, and you keep the stuff.” What does Abraham say?

He says—verse 22—“I need nothing from you. You can't make me rich. Only my Most High God can.”

Abraham does some stupid and unfaithful things throughout his life. But *here*, at least, he is walking in Advent faith.

Then a second king comes out to meet Abraham. Melchizedek, king of Salem--short for Jerusalem.

In verse 20, Abraham gives a tenth of his possessions to Melchizedek. Abraham defeats and liberates kings. He's now their lords. He doesn't take their money. Abraham bows down to this king of Salem, makes himself his servant, and gives him 10% of everything he has. Amazing.

An Advent heart sees with the eyes of Abraham's faith. Advent is the end of hoarding blessings. Because an Advent heart knows that God is coming with every blessing.

We sing “Praise God from whom all blessings flow” every week. Do we believe it? Advent teaches us that the best blessings are still in our future. Do we actually believe it? Does it show? Do we—with our time, our wealth, our energy,—act like we have to grab everything we can get? Or do we know with our hearts, and show with our lives, that the greatest blessings are always still in our future?

2. Advent means the beginning of helping and healing

Advent with Abraham is not only the end of hoarding. Advent also means the beginning of helping and healing.

“Advent with Abraham, Part 2: The Plunder and the Priest” Hebrews 7:1-7, 17, 21-25; Genesis 14:17-24

To spend Advent with Abraham means that we walk with him as he tries to follow the Lord, trusting in his promised blessings. As we walk with him through this part of his life, we can see him getting involved in things that he could have just ignored.

But for Abraham, what happened to Lot and especially to the women of his family is an injustice. Foreign armies had taken their possessions and carried them off to be slaves.

So he says to himself, “Look— if I’m blessed to be a blessing, I’ll take my trained soldiers and my resources and I will liberate my nephew and his family from captivity. I’ll take back their stolen wealth.”

Abraham wanted to do what was right. He wanted to bring help and healing. To restore what was lost through the greed of wealthy and proud kings.

The point here is not to say that every international problem is your problem. The point is certainly not to praise American-style interventionism and to shame Swiss-style neutrality.

But if you are blessed by the Most High God, you’re blessed in order to *be a blessing*. As you wait in Advent hope of God’s promised blessing, you look for opportunities to bring God’s blessing to others in Jesus’ name. We can expend our energy, wealth, time, and our very selves for the sake of others.

If *you* are walking in Advent faith, *you* are walking around your home, your church, your neighborhood, your workplace, and you’re asking: “Could I bring help and healing here? Just a little bit?”

3. Advent means the mind of heaven

Maybe you’re saying to yourself: “What do you *actually* expect me to do, pastor? Help people. Heal people. Quit hoarding. How much do I have to give? To help? To heal? How much can I keep for myself?”

Or maybe you’re saying to yourself: “Preach it, pastor! I know some people who really need to hear this. Who need to be generous. Who need to care about people in need.”

“Advent with Abraham, Part 2: The Plunder and the Priest”
Hebrews 7:1-7, 17, 21-25; Genesis 14:17-24

Know what? I’m both of these people. I like the *idea* of being a helper, a healer, a giver. I wish others were more generous, less stingy. I want people to see me *looking* generous with my time and energy and resources. *But* I don’t like to be challenged to be more generous.

If you’re anything like me ... we need Advent to get deeper into our hearts today.

The only way that Advent with Abraham will mean the end of hoarding and the beginning of helping and healing, is if, above all, Advent with Abraham means we get the mind of heaven.

Look at how Advent gave Abraham the mind of heaven. This Melchizedek guy comes out of *nowhere* (18).

“Hi. I’m Melchizedek. I’m from Salem. I’m Jerusalem’s king. I worship the one God of gods. Unlike my neighbors in Canaan, I know the God who *created* both heaven and earth.

“And as king, I’ve been trying to rule in a way that my people will give their lives to the One Great God, the real King who made everything and rules everything.

“So I’m a priest of the Most High God, too.

“I hear that you have been called by the Most High God too? That he’s given you promises—that you’ll be blessed; that your children’s children will bless all the nations of the world. I hear you want to pray and to live according to God’s promised blessings. I heard that’s why you rescued your nephew, restored the things plundered, and liberated all those women taken captive.

“I am not here to create a political alliance with you. Instead, I’ve got this bread and wine. Let’s eat and drink. Let’s praise our Most High God together. And I’ll give you a benediction, a blessing. How’s that sound?”

Abraham must have been stunned.

“Advent with Abraham, Part 2: The Plunder and the Priest”
Hebrews 7:1-7, 17, 21-25; Genesis 14:17-24

“Where did *this* guy come from? I thought I was the only one who served the Most High God. And here he is, a greater king than me. Already here in the Land. Ruling, worshipping, serving God. And he’s blessing *me*? Maybe God’s promises are true. I mean ... of *course* they’re true. But wow — they’re *really* true! My God has loved me and rescued me and blessed me to be a blessing!”

They eat the bread. They drink the wine. And Melchizedek lifts up his hands over Abraham, and puts God’s blessing on him and his life. And they praise God together.

And Abraham says: “Melchizedek. Thank you. I want to give you one tenth of all I have. I can’t out-bless or out-give our God. His promises to me are so rich, that my little gift to you is nothing compared to all that has been given me.”

Advent, God’s coming to bless the nations, has come home to Abraham’s heart.

1000 years later, in Psalm 110, David the king is called the “high priest forever, in the same priesthood as Melchizedek.” David sits on the throne in the same city as this priest-king who blessed Abraham. David’s trying to carry on Melchizedek’s ministry.

But the psalm says David is priest “forever” and king “forever”. How?

The New Testament talks about this Psalm more than any other chapter in the Old Testament. Jesus says that David is not writing a song about himself, but about a *son* of David who would turn out to be David’s lord.

His song is actually about *Jesus Christ* is the true priest-king of Salem, following Melchizedek. He’s the priest-king on David’s throne. Forever. The Maker of Heaven and Earth himself, who came in our flesh to live with us. To rule. To bless. To be our priest. To be the sacrifice for our sins. To be a blessing to all nations. To make *us*, his people, a blessing for all nations.

The stunning surprise for Abraham that day with Melchizedek, was that God was already at work in the world *before* he got to work in the life of Abraham. And that gave him a heart full of confidence that the God who promised him great blessing would fulfill those promises.

“Advent with Abraham, Part 2: The Plunder and the Priest”
Hebrews 7:1-7, 17, 21-25; Genesis 14:17-24

How can Abraham’s Advent mean the end of hoarding and the beginning of helping and healing? Because he’s stunned again by the blessing he’s received.

You and I need to be surprised and stunned again to realize that our Melchizedek, the Lord Jesus Christ, has already come, bringing blessing and bread and wine and so much more. And if our hearts are stunned and surprised again by this reality, our hearts will be filled with confidence that the God who promised to come again in Christ to make his blessings known will fulfill those promises.

And now we’re called to live our lives as a response to this stunning surprise. To give our resources to others in Jesus’ name like Abraham gave his to Melchizedek. To have the mind of heaven, the mind of Jesus Christ. To remember that we can’t out-give the great giver, or out-bless the great Blesser.