

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

**“Do not be afraid, Abram.
I am your shield,
your very great reward.”**

² But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” ⁵ He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (NIV84)

Theme: The Gospel Abraham Believed.

1. “I am your shield”
2. “I am your very great reward”

Many people have said “there are only two things certain in this life: death and taxes.” While that saying is somewhat humorous, it does have some ring of truth to it. Yet, those aren’t the only two things that are certain in this life. Death is certain, because sin is also certain. And because sin is certain, you can be sure that fear is certain too. We saw fear that sin caused last week. When God called out for Adam after the first sin, he said, **I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid.** The Christmas gospel has always served to alleviate fear. When Gabriel came to Mary he said to her, **Do not be afraid.** He said the same to Joseph, as did the angel who appeared to the Shepherds that first Christmas night. The gospel of Christmas removes fear. The same stands for the gospel promise Abraham, then known as Abram, believed. First God said: “I am your shield” and secondly: “I am your very great reward.”

In chapter 12 God promised Abraham a three-fold blessing: 1. He would have a son who would become a great nation. 2. His descendants would inherit the Promised Land of Canaan. 3. All nations on earth would be blessed through him and his seed. In the years that followed this promise it seemed as if Abraham had it all. He was rich and prosperous. He was victorious in battle. In fact, Abraham was so rich that he had 318 trained servants that fought the battle with him. And after the battle, a priest of God, Melchizedek, blessed him. It seemed as if all was going well for Abraham. He had it all, you can say.

Yet something was missing. Someone really. He didn’t have a son. In order for the other blessings that God promised him to come true, he had to have a son first. And it seemed as if time was running out for him to have a son. Abraham was 75 years old when God first promised him a son. And his wife, Sarah, was 65. It had been about 10 years since that first promise. He must have been afraid that he would never have a son.

Abraham didn’t say anything. Nothing gives us the impression that Abraham ever complained to God about it. Yet God knew. When God said something to him Abraham told him what was bothering him. **What can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus? You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.** God had blessed Abraham immensely. Yet he didn’t have a son. So Abraham was afraid that God’s promises wouldn’t come true.

In the same way, God has blessed you with many great things. One way or another he has provided for all that you need to live—a roof over your head, plenty to eat and drink, and clothes to keep you warm. But he has also blessed you with many things you don’t need to survive—things that make our life more enjoyable. He also promises to guard and protect you. God has richly blessed you. That much is certain—just like Abraham. But is something missing? Are you afraid of something? Many worry if God is going to keep his promises or not. Will he guard and protect you? Will he take care of your every need?

Or maybe your fears are more specific. Are you afraid that you can’t make ends meet? That you have no one to love you? Many people

worry about their health. They don't want their life to be anything less than perfect. They don't want to die—because they are afraid of death. So their whole lives are dedicated to staying healthy or getting healthy, or paying a fortune for some treatment. But eventually their health will fail. And so they are afraid that God isn't watching over them. They wonder if God really keeps his promises.

God knew Abraham was afraid. So he came to him and said, **Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield.** God calmed his fears right away. Abraham didn't have to say anything, God knew his thoughts and worries. And he promised to protect him. Abraham had nothing to worry about. God was on his side. He was going to take care of him.

God was Abraham's shield, but he is ours too. A shield protects a soldier from certain weapons like spears, arrows, and swords. But there are something that it can't protect from—like missiles, chemical warfare, or diseases. But God Almighty is our shield. He has power over all things—including sickness, diseases, and even sin, death, and the devil. As our shield he will guard and protect us against all harm and danger. He won't let anything harm us that will take away our faith. He will use the bad things in our lives to help strengthen our faith. So have no reason to be afraid. We have nothing to fear. For the Lord, our shield, is with us.

But there is something else that God promised Abraham in our text for today—something greater. He also said, **I am your very great reward.**

Abraham was afraid he wouldn't have a child, and thus the rest of the promised blessings he would receive wouldn't come true. So God reiterated his promise. God **took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”** It has been estimated that about 8000 stars can be seen from in the Middle Eastern sky at night. But that's not the point. The point is that you can't possibly count them all on your own. Abraham's offspring would be so numerous, you wouldn't be able to count them all—just like the sands on the seashore. But in order for this to come true Abraham needed a son.

Eventually this would come true. As it turns out Abraham had numerous sons. The most important son was Isaac—born when Abraham was 100 years old—25 years after the first promise. Through Isaac and his son, Jacob, God founded the nation of Israel. God's promise was fulfilled. Abraham's descendants became a great nation—too numerous to count.

But that wasn't most important blessing God promised to Abraham. God put the most important blessing this way, **through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.** Paul had this in mind when he wrote his letter to the Galatians. **The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.** All nations on earth were blessed through one specific offspring of Abraham—Jesus Christ. God had Jesus in mind when he promised these blessings to Abraham. This is the Christmas gospel. The promise of a Savior. All nations would be blessed through Abraham because the Savior of all nations would come from his line. And it was passed down from Abraham to Isaac and Jacob—down through David and to Mary. Jesus, the Savior of the world, is a descendant of Abraham.

But God never said that all nations would be blessed through his offspring in our text for today. But he does say, **I will be your very great reward.** Abraham had just turned down a reward from the king of Sodom for winning a battle for him. So God was going to give him a reward: Himself.

When Christ was born 2000 years later he fulfilled God's promise to Abraham. The Savior of the world, a descendant of Abraham, was born to bring the peace of forgiveness to all men. And this descendant of Abraham was also the Son of God. And they would call him, Immanuel. Which means, “God with us.” God would be Abraham's reward. For God would be born as his descendant. Abraham didn't have to worry. Because through his descendent, Jesus Christ—true God and true man, all nations on earth would be blessed.

Abraham knew God's promises would come true. As Moses writes in verse 6, **Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.** Through faith Abraham was saved. Through his faith

in this promised Savior, he received everything his descendant would accomplish for him. There wasn't anything Abraham could do or needed to do. His descendant would do it all for him. He was saved through faith. Faith in one that he didn't know. Faith in something that seemed impossible.

The same stands for us today. In fact, this verse is quoted multiple times in the New Testament. Including Paul in Romans 4. **The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.** We are saved through the same means as Abraham. Not by works, but through faith in the promised Savior. Our faith makes us spiritual descendants of Abraham—he is the Father of all believers. God's promised blessings came true—Abraham's descendants truly are more numerous than the stars in the sky and sands in the seashore. The Christ child may look so meek and lowly in the manger, but he is the one who would live a perfect life, die an innocent death, only to rise from the dead—all for us. And it is through faith in that seemingly impossible promise that we are saved—just like Abraham. And so like Abraham we have nothing to fear. Amen.