

Genesis 14:18-24

Raise up your eyes

To God Most High

To the one who raises *you* up

With my vicar year ending soon, I was feeling kind of introspective...so let's be introspective together. Where did you expect your life to be right now? Go back five years, ten years, twenty years, where did you think you'd be right now or what did you think you'd be doing? Did you think you'd be doing the job you have? Did you think your family would be the way it is? What are the things that got you here? Ten years ago I was a freshman in high school, and when I thought about the future I wanted to be a fire fighter, because there was *no way* I was going to be a pastor like my dad. Little did I know a conversation with my cousin, who was in the seminary, would change the direction of my life. *Five* years ago I was sitting around all heartbroken because a girl broke up with me...little did I know that not even a year later I would start getting to know my future wife. Life takes twists and turns and it's hard to see when those twists will happen. And it's even harder to see how those twists will turn out. How our lives will turn out.

All those twists and turns can be kind of intimidating, so we do a lot of things in life to try to be happy and comfortable. What's your habit, what's your hobby that you do to keep the stress of a "twisty" life down? Do you go to parties? Watch t.v.? Try and remember past successes?

But what happens, then, when *those* things start to take up our whole road? What I mean is what happens when interests, habits, people fill up so much of what we see, what we want, that we don't notice the One who keeps us going down the road?

We're talking about 1st commandment stuff here. "You shall have no other gods." Or Jesus said it again in a different way, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Have you ever noticed how easy it is to break that commandment? How easy it is for something other than God to take up all our focus and attention?

It's like sin is always trying to jump in our vision and block our sight of God. It's really hard to walk down a road focusing on God if instead all you're seeing is a bottle. It's really hard to walk down a road paying attention to God if we can't see him past ourselves and what we think we can do. It's impossible to have God in the right place in our lives if all we're doing is looking down at everything sin wants us to see.

So what do we do? We raise our eyes up. We look to God Most High. To our God who is above everything that this world tries to say will give us happiness and peace...because all of that only fades away or abandons us. God is above everything in this world that has failed us, he's even above our own failures. We raise our eyes up to him.

Our lesson today talked about Abram who is a prime example of a life filled with twists and turns. The first one came when God came to Abram and said it was time for him to pack up his business, his employees, everything he'd ever known, and move. Abram didn't even know exactly where he was going! What he did know, was that his God Most High was up above looking down the road for him. Seeing where he needed to be. So Abraham raised up his eyes, and followed.

But life didn't get easier when he finally got to this new country...in fact, the twists were only getting started. Not too much later and his nephew Lot, who was living in a city called Sodom, was taken captive when another army came through. It would have been pretty easy for Abram's 90 year-old-self to stay at home and out of the way...but since Abram kept his eyes raised up to God Most High, he knew what he had to do. He gathered up all the fighting men he could, any allies he had, and hunted that army down. And when he found them, Abram and his allies gave that army a solid beating and brought all the captives back

That's where our lesson picks up. With Abraham marching back home all victorious.

Read text

Abram went by the city of Salem, which was the old name for Jerusalem. It was there that Abram met a special king, named Melchizedek. And apparently Melchizedek was also a priest to the same God who Abram had fixed his eyes so firmly on.

Now keep in mind that Abram just came off of a HUGE victory. He had been a stranger to the country, but now he was a hero! You would think he'd go up to Melchizedek and throw his weight around a little bit...he was the great Abram now!

But how does he treat Melchizedek? He gives him a tenth of *everything*. Melchizedek wasn't Abram's king, he didn't owe him anything...Abram was thinking of who Melchizedek represented. That he represented the Most High God.

You see, Abram knew that no matter how many armies he defeated, no matter how many huge, impossible journeys he took, he was still not perfect. He never would be. With his own abilities he would never be able to go up, and meet his Most High God on his level.

That's what we have to remember too. We can't meet our Most High God on our own. Our sin makes it so hard to keep God most important in our lives, so we can't even keep the 1st commandment...let alone all the other ones! Our Most High God is definitely far above us.

Since there's no way for us to make ourselves come to where God's level is, he comes to where we are. He did it for Abram through Melchizedek when he blessed Abram....but that was just a preview. There is no greater example of what God Most High is willing to do for his people, of how he is not some aloof, uncaring God way up above us, than to look at Jesus.

It's in Jesus that we see how he came down as one of us, not keeping himself separated. Doing it all only because his love is so unstoppable that he would not stay away. Jesus has not even stopped being the bridge between us on the Most High God. Listen to what

the book of Hebrews says about Jesus. "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens."

When Jesus became a man he didn't become any less God, he's still God. It's because Jesus' perfect life and perfect sacrifice on the cross that we know we are completely connected to the Most High God. He even proves it still today through blessings like Communion. In just a little bit those of you taking Communion will be personal witnesses to God himself, the true body and blood of Jesus. God is not staying way up high away from us, he's right here, loving us now.

That is why our God is the God Most High. That is why he is worthy of our praise, offerings, and time. Why he is so high above anything else in this world...because he has proven to us that he is willing to do whatever it takes to get us down our road. Willing to do whatever it takes to make sure our road leads to be with him in heaven.

So raise up your eyes, raise them up to God Most High, because he deserves it. And also because he raises you up too.

Now we looked at what the King Melchizedek did for Abram, but what about the king of Sodom? He told Abram that he could keep all the goods for himself. Everything that he took back from the enemy army could be his. But Abram makes a bold statement and says, "I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal."

Abram rejected the offer, because he didn't want to ever plant his confidence in the riches of the world. He only wanted to keep his eyes fixed up above.

It's hard to tell the King of Sodom's motives, but at best he was wanting to give Abram the kind of security and help he always wanted...the kind of help that comes from the riches and things. But Abram knew that he had something better.

The problem with this world is that so many people don't know that there can be something better in life, that there is something else to look forward to. They search and they search for happiness...only to come up empty.

It makes me think of a problem that Ohio is having right now. Recently they really cracked down on regulating strong pain medication, all in hopes of curbing people from taking it recreationally. What they didn't expect an extreme outbreak of heroine use. This problem affects all social strata, ages, and races. An incredible amount of people apparently feel like they need this drug to get them through their lives.

That may be an extreme example, but I think Ohio's problem is a lot like the world's problem at large. Always searching for the next answer to happiness...no matter how harmful it may be. But then think about what makes a Christian's life so special...we know we have the greatest thing that could ever be offered to us. We have Jesus and we have heaven.

After Abram turned down the King of Sodom, God came to him and said something incredible, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." Think about that. Right now, no matter what Abram would do, God *is* his shield, guarding him. He *is* his great reward, making him rich. This is what gave Abram the ability to keep his eyes fixed on God. It was because God had already raised him up, so that he would never have to give into the temptations in his life.

That's us too. We are raised above the temptations of this world, because we don't need them. We need never be distracted by everything that tries to replace God, tries to be more important than him, because only God is *our* shield, *our* great reward. He is all those things, right now. He's what makes it possible for us to keep going down the road of our lives. He makes it so we can travel through our twists and turns without fear. Without fear, because we know the reward that waits for us. Jesus has met us where we needed him to, that is the surest thing in our lives and nothing in this world could ever match it.

So let's be introspective again. Where do you want your life to be five years from now? Ten, twenty? Wherever you go, whatever you do, remember to keep the road clear and raise up your eyes to God Most High. He will keep you raised up through it all. As the Psalmist said, "I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken." Amen.

Psalm 16:8