

Readings

Scripture

¹⁷ After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). ¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. ²¹ And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself." ²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.' ²⁴ I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share."

- Genesis 14:17-24 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

For Abram the harder battle begins, for there is a profound contrast between the two kings who come to meet him. Melchizedek, king and priest, his name and title expressive of the realm of right and good (see Heb. 7:2), offers him, in token, a simple sufficiency from God, pronounces an unspecified blessing (dwelling on the Giver, not the gift), and accepts costly tribute. All this is meaningful only to faith. The king of Sodom, on the other hand, makes a handsome and businesslike offer; its sole disadvantage is perceptible, again, only to faith. To these rival benefactors Abram signifies his Yes and his No, refusing to compromise his call.

- Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (p. 120-121)

"'Brought out bread and wine...' Bread and water would have been the staple diet. Bread and wine is royal fare (1 Sam 16:20) and regularly accompanied animal sacrifice... Melchizedek, who in traditional Near Eastern fashion combined the offices of king and priest, should have had ample supplies of bread and wine. Here he is portrayed as laying on a royal banquet for Abram the returning conqueror."

- Gordon Wenham, *Genesis* (p. 316)

"'He was a priest of El-Elyon.' Note that Melchizedek is the first priest named in Scripture. El-Elyon is one of the titles of the God worshiped by the patriarchs. Others include El-Olam, El-Shaddai, El-God of Israel. El, the supreme god of the Canaanite pantheon in the second millennium, often has his name qualified by some epithet, such as Elyon, Shaddai or creator of earth."

- Gordon Wenham, *Genesis* (p. 316)

"'He gave him a tenth of everything.' Tithing was an old and widespread custom in the ancient origin. Tithes were given to both sanctuaries and kings. Melchizedek qualifies on both counts. Here, however, it is probably in virtue of his priesthood that Abram gives him a tithe. For as Abram has received a priestly blessing from Melchizedek, it is fitting that he should respond in the customary fashion."

- Gordon Wenham, *Genesis* (p. 317)

Sermon Outline

Blessed by Melchizedek

Genesis 14:17-24

The Life of Blessing

Matt Esswein

God extends his blessing to Abram again through the mysterious figure of Melchizedek, King of Salem and priest of God Most High (El Elyon).

Why is this mysterious blessing from Melchizedek significant for Abram? And then for us?

Background: Abram had just rescued Lot with his household special forces unit.

(Genesis 14:12-16)

WHO are the characters in this story? (Genesis 14:17-20)

WHAT is happening in this confusing text? (Genesis 14:17-24)

WHY does it matter? (Genesis 14:18-22; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:1-4)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- Who likes hunting for Easter eggs? Whether it be out in the yard, in the house, or hunting for them within technology, what makes hunting for "eggs" so fun? and sometimes so frustrating?
- What do you find surprising about Abram's defeat of Lot's oppressors? (Genesis 14:11-16)
- What makes Melchizedek a mysterious figure in this story? What does his name, where he's from, and for whom he is a priest tell about him? (Genesis 14:18-20)
- How are the responses of the King of Sodom and Melchizedek different following Abram's rescue? Why is this important?
- What do you notice about Melchizedek's blessing? How does this connect with Genesis 12:1-2?
- How does Abram show his reliance upon the Lord rather than on his own strength?
- How does Melchizedek foreshadow Christ our great high priest?
- Why do we need to lean into the Greater High Priest, Jesus Christ, in these uncertain days?
- What might it practically look like for us to lean into Christ as our Great High Priest while we are in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic? In quarantine with our families, roommates, or by ourselves? Longing for and preparing for re-opening? Seeking to love our church community?
- How can you specifically be a blessing to those you are around this week?