

August 10, 2014
The National Presbyterian Church
Abraham: But You Promised Me
Genesis 18:1-15
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In our sermons through the month of August we are thinking together about the life and faith of a man who lived 3,500 – 4,000 years ago – a long, long time ago – a man whose name was Abraham, and part of whose story we just heard in our scripture reading.

Abraham stands at the foundation of each of the three great monotheistic world religions: at the foundation of our own Christian faith; and at the foundation of Judaism; and at the foundation of Islam as well. So here is this solitary individual who has impacted billions (yes, literally billions) of human lives. We find him mentioned in various scriptures and supplementary writings of the different faiths.

In the pages of our Bible, for example, in God's Holy Word . . .

- We find him mentioned in the Old Testament, in the books of the major prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and in the book of Psalms;
- We find him mentioned in the New Testament in the letter to the Hebrews and then Paul's letters to the Galatians and to the Romans; as well as in each of our four gospel accounts of Jesus;
- And, primarily, we find his story spelled out for us in one section of scripture, at the heart of the first book of the Old Testament, the book of Genesis, in Chapters 11 through 25 – where we read not only of Abraham's story and of Abraham's life but where we read and learn about the God of Abraham: the God in whom he came to trust more and more.

What we know about Abraham's God from Genesis and (to bring us up to date in our series) what we've talked about so far in the series is this:

- That Abraham believed in a God who speaks. We may take that for granted and say "so what else is new?" Except, there's no reason to take this understanding for granted! The fact of the matter is that when the Biblical prophets and psalmists condemn idolatry, *it is often the fact that those idols are silent and cannot save or speak that they react most strongly* (Psalm 115:5; 135:13; Jer.10:13-15; 51:14-17) They are dead. They are inanimate. But the God in whom we believe is personal and speaks to ordinary human beings – and we see this most clearly in the life of Abraham. To be sure, we also see this in the stories of Adam and Eve, and in the life of Noah, but in the life of Abraham this becomes explicit and powerful. This God is a God who speaks and not only speaks but calls ordinary individuals like you and me into his service and wants to direct the course of our lives.

- The call and direction of God in Abraham's life. This is essential to the story of Abraham. God speaking and calling and directing Abraham . . . to leave his home town, a place called Ur in what is now modern day Iraq . . . and *head out on a journey*, with no clue as to what or where his destination might be.

This was a journey which was both physical and spiritual; external and internal; geographic (across the face of the Earth) and a journey of faith.

- So that Abraham physically/geographically, for example, moved from what is now modern day Iraq up to the border of Syria and Turkey: to a place called Haran. From there he traveled south to what is modern day Lebanon and Israel, all the way down to Egypt and then back north again to what is now the modern day West Bank. He settled first of all in a place just north of where the Palestinian Authority is based, a town called Ramallah. He settled north of there and then moved south to Hebron, where there's presently great contention between Jewish settlers and the Palestinian people. So geographically in real time and space Abraham set out on a journey.
- But this journey was not just geographical or physical it was spiritual as well. In moving geographically, Abraham was also moving spiritually. His life was changing. His home town of Ur of the Chaldees, we know from archeology, was a wealthy place. It was a cultural center. But it was also a place of great idolatry. And God called Abraham out of the old environment in order to give him a new life of faith.

One of the statements which guides much of youth ministry these days (and I think it's true of adults as well as of youth) is that *more work can be accomplished in one week of summer camp or mission than in the whole year of youth group meetings* – because you take the youth out of their present environment and you place them somewhere else, and they begin to see and think about their lives in a completely different way.

So you've got this interface between the geographic journey and the spiritual journey which people take, and just as it happens with youth, it happened with Abraham. God moved him geographically but the journey was also spiritual.

- And the movement, the journey, was not just Abraham's alone, but God's too: In a sense, God took a journey into Abraham's life. So, to begin with, God could be seen to be on the periphery of Abraham's life. But in and through this journey, there is no question, God moved from the periphery into the center of Abraham's life, so that God was not just the outside, "there for Abraham," (with Abraham calling the shots to God), but God moved to center stage, directing Abraham's life. Or to use another analogy, God moved from the passenger seat in the Abraham's life, to the driver's seat. And that is a powerful and a radical shift – one that God wants to make in our lives as well. Perhaps we could put it like this: that when this God-journey happens, your whole world revolves around a different center, quite different from before.

One of my favorite authors is Robert Coles, and some years ago now he wrote a book called *The Secular Mind*. In this book he interviewed different people. One of them was a friend of

his, Carlos Williams, who, in turn, interviewed an Italian immigrant – an old lady who came to this country when she was 15. The interview goes like this -- she says “

“it’s become different here going to church here in the United States than it was when I was in Italy or when I first came here. I used to sit there and talk to God and try to figure out what God wanted and tried to please God. Now I mostly think about what is going on in my life and my kids’ lives and I ask God to make it better. It used to be that I prayed to God that I would learn what God wanted from me and how God wanted me to behave. I wanted God’s help to be that kind of person, the kind God wanted. But now I pray to God that God help us with this problem or that as if it’s me talking to myself and I’m only asking God to help out with things.”

I don’t know if you hear what she’s saying, but what I hear her say is this: that *the spiritual journey she has taken in moving geographically from her old country to this country was, sadly, the reverse journey of Abraham’s spiritual journey!* God had been at the center, but now was at the periphery. Life was so busy. God was there but on the outside: “*This is my life now, bless my life.*” Whereas with Abraham, it is “*This is my life*” and God says “*Oh, no. Your life is no longer your own. I’m going to call the shots in your life: GO!*”

God moving absolutely to the center as if Abraham’s life was caught up in a drama, a divine drama, an eternal drama that was bigger than his life, and that gave meaning and significance to who he was. A bigger drama, in which our life finds its part and its place.

- Rather like Frodo and Sam being caught up in the drama of Middle Earth, in *The Lord of the Rings*: whether they wanted to or not! There’s something going on in the world, and you can live off on the side, not quite in it – but they choose not to; they choose to “Go!” into it, and that drama now begins to define their lives, give them meaning and significance, and create of their lives something that wasn’t there before.
- In the same way, it’s true for Susan and Edmond and Lucy in the *Chronicles of Narnia*. They step through a wardrobe into another world, and things begin to happen over which they now have very little control. Well they do, they can make choices. But the drama is different, and their lives now have an entirely new significance.
- Or, slightly more up to date it’s the same thing with Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* books and movies. Katniss is caught up in something she would rather not be caught up in: a game that is not a game! In this case something evil, and yet even there, as some people find with war, she finds her life in that larger drama: meaning and significance that was not there when she was just a solitary private individual.

This is what happens with Abraham. This is what God’s leading leads him into. This is the God of Abraham who has his plans and purposes and says, not just to Abraham but to all who will listen: “You! Come and join me.” Not just “Let me bless your life!” But, “You! Come and join me!” And Abraham stands as the paradigm of that way of life for your life and my life.

So we've thought about these things with Abraham – Abraham an ordinary man, an ordinary person, nobody special, who believed and trusted in a God who spoke to him, a God who called him. This idea of “call,” by the way, became a major emphasis in the days of the 16th century Protestant Reformation. And our heritage as Presbyterians is to affirm that God calls ordinary people not just into “the ministry,” but into our everyday mundane jobs and tasks in life. God issues a call for us to not just to earn money but to use the gifts he's given us and to be his people in all kinds of places of work.

The Promise-Making God. This morning, as we continue thinking about Abraham, what I want us to focus on is this: that this God who speaks and calls and directs, also made promises to Abraham – stunning promises. God was willing to humble himself and make a commitment to Abraham, a contract with Abraham, a covenant with Abraham by which God, the almighty God, the creator of the universe, bound himself to this tiny solitary individual figure. A commitment, a promise, given by God the creator to this individual person, binding himself to be passionately interested in the course of this man's life.

In the case of Abraham the promises were at least four-fold.

- (1) He promised to lead Abraham safely to his destination, to be a guide. Sometimes we use the word shepherd to be his shepherd, to be a good shepherd (Psalm 23; John 10:11).
- (2) He promised to give Abraham a land, a place to live and a place to thrive in which God's kingdom, as it were, might be manifested on Earth as it is in Heaven (Matthew 6:10)
- (3) He promised to give Abraham descendants more numerous than the dust of the Earth
- (4) and he promised to make Abraham's life meaningful and effective so that his life would impact and touch the lives of others. He promised to make him to be a blessing to others.

Listen again to these promises as they are unfolded in the 12th and the 13th Chapters of the book of Genesis.

The Lord said to Abraham go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. [DR: I'm going to be your guide and your shepherd.] I will make of you a great nation. [DR: I'm going to give you descendants]. I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. The ones who curse you I will curse. [DR: I will protect you along the way] and in you all the families shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3)

This is astounding! – the whole earth blessed through this one man. In Genesis 13:14-17 the promises of the land and descendants are reiterated:

The Lord said to Abraham raise your eyes now and look from the place where you are northward and southward and eastward and westward for all the land that you see I'll give to you and to your offspring after you forever. I will make your

offspring like the dust of the Earth so that if one can count the dust of the Earth your offspring also can be counted. Rise up; walk through the length and the breadth of the land for I will give it to you.

And these promises have come true in the most remarkable way, despite the fact (and this is really important), despite the fact that Abraham's faith and the faith of his wife Sarah, their faith was not always perfect. Yes: Abraham is held up in the Bible as a paradigm of faith – nevertheless . . . Abraham's faith, and his wife Sarah's faith, these "paragons of faith," were not by any means always perfect!!

In fact one of the great things about the pages of the Bible, one of the things the Bible does not hide from us is the imperfection of Biblical saints. Apart from Jesus himself pretty much all the others are deeply flawed individuals whose flaws are manifest in the pages of scripture and are not hidden from us. And this is absolutely the case with Abraham as it was for example with King David who committed adultery and murder; Simon Peter who was ashamed of his master and denied that he knew him; the apostle Paul who persecuted other Christians. Abraham was right in there with them!

This man of faith struggled at times as did his wife Sarah struggled at times to believe. And I believe that there is power in knowing that for us as well – who are called to be faithful, but who at times struggle.

Struggling to Believe in God's Promise of Descendants. In particular the story that we read in our scripture readings in Chapters 18 and 17 of Genesis depict this struggle that they have believing that God will give to them descendants. Maybe some of the other promises they could believe, and believe easily; but the promise of having descendants seemed so bizarre, so unbelievable, that they deeply struggled with it. When God made the promise they were old enough, but ten years passes by in the story (in a matter of a few chapters) and they grow older and older and older, and there is still no child in sight; the scriptures are clear, and Abraham and Sarah are clear, that they are beyond the age of having children. The situation seems absolutely hopeless – and they do what, perhaps, we might have done: they took matters into their own hands. You can imagine the whisper: *"Maybe we should manipulate the situation to get what we think God wants or certainly what we want?"* And they begin to do think about something which seems very strange and weird to us, but which was a common practice in those days – which was for Abraham to have a child by Sarah's maid, Hagar.

And, in time, this is exactly what happened. Sarah's maid Hagar had a son by Abraham, whose name was Ishmael; and the two of them, Sarah and Abraham, began to place their hopes on Ishmael as the one through whom they would have many descendants: *"Ah, God will keep his promise through this child. Not through "our" child but through this child.*

And in the midst of their doubt and their playing around with God's promise, and with the years passing by, God steps into the picture again finally and says *"No, this is not what I intend at all. The two of you are going to have a child and through your child those descendants will*

come.” God confirms the promise again to Abraham; and God confirms the promise again to Sarah – and their immediate reaction is *not* to say, “Thank you Lord for setting us straight, now we believe.” But in both cases, in these wonderful truth-to-life stories that we hear: . . . the two of them, both Abraham and Sarah, laugh! They laugh! And, their laughter, as scholar Walter Brugerma says insightfully, is *the laughter of disbelief*. The laughter of disbelief.

- Hear Genesis 17:17 again: **Abraham fell on his face and laughed**. [DR: This word from God was, he thought, a joke] *He said to himself “Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah who is 90 years old bear a child?”*
- And then Chapter 18:10, when the Lord appears to Abraham again he says, *“I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son. And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age and it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying “After I’ve grown old and my husband is old shall I have the pleasure of a child?” The Lord said to Abraham “Why did Sarah laugh?” [DR: there are no secrets from God] . . . and say, “Shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old?” Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time, I will return to you in due season and Sarah shall have a son. But Sarah denied it saying “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid of what God would think. But God said “Oh yes, but you did laugh!”* Yes you did!

And we might well think “Oh, its curtains for the two of them! They proved to be faithless; it’s all over; they have doubted instead of rising up in faith!” . . . but in his grace, God seems to overlook their faithlessness – and seems more concerned about having the last laugh – when in “due” season (so to speak!) Sarah does conceive and bears a son, and the promise of descendants begins to be fulfilled, even as God said.

- The promise of God to Abraham, to show the way (and Abraham reaches his destination safely) – God is a faithful guide;
- The promise to Abraham of a place to go to, a land to settle in (the “Promised Land”) and they settle there;
- The promise of descendants, against all the odds, linked with the promise to be a blessing – both fulfilled in the most staggering way through the coming of that son Isaac and through his descendants after him leading up to the descendant, to whom we turn as Christians most of all: our Lord Jesus Christ, the physical descendant of Abraham – a source of blessing to the whole earth in a way that Abraham could never have imagined or manipulated. Indeed, when the promise, nobody could have conceived of how, and to what extent, the promise would be fulfilled. Through this Jesus in particular billions of people across the earth, as the promise indicated, have been blessed – because of Abraham’s faith, and despite his faltering faithlessness.

For me, the fulfillment of these promises is staggering, simply staggering. I put them right up there with the big bang of creation (why there’s something rather than nothing): this staggers me all the time. And with the empty tomb of Jesus’ resurrection (which leads us to put our trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior). The fulfillment of the promises staggers me, and leads me to say to

myself not only, “If there is no God how could this be?” But, “if there is a God, maybe this God really is the God of Abraham? – One who speaks, calls, directs, makes promises and stoops down to us, not only to make the promises, but to fulfil his promises, not in our time or our way, but in his time and his way! He’s at the center we are not; though we would like his timetable to revolve around ours, its our lives that need to revolve around his, who makes promises and keeps them for us, just as he did for Abraham.

Indeed when we turn to the rest of the Bible, in both Old Testament and New Testament we find that the God of Abraham remains this kind of God: one who speaks to people, who calls them, directs them and makes them remarkable promises, that can be trusted, one after the other. Our God is a promise making, promise keeping, trustworthy God who calls us to put our faith in him not because he’s unbelievable but because in the course of time and space, in the lives of people just like us (like Abraham!) he has proved himself to be trustworthy. And for the journey that we’ve been called to live, his making and keeping of promises, will see us safely to our journey’s destination and end.

If you want to at this time to turn to the appendix at the end of this sermon, you’ll see that I’ve selected a few dozen promises, central to our faith. There are lots more. But on these promises, as Christians have known from generation to generation, our lives can depend. This is a foundation from which we can head off on whatever journey or path God wants us to travel.

- God promises to us not so much to give us a land or a territory (we hear very little about the explicit promise of land in the New Testament), but God does promise to give us a “place,” a place of security in which we can flourish, and that we can make as much like the Kingdom of Heaven as possible – here on earth. “Blessed are the meek,” says Jesus “for they shall inherit the Earth” (Matt. 5: 5 – in other words: they are the true descendants of Abraham). Or, as Jesus promised his disciples when he was about to die: *“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places (that is, “I have a place for you”). If it were not so, I would not have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and take you to myself so that where I am there you will be also.”* John 14:1-3. Jesus’ promise is not just about a place in heaven when we die; but about a place in God’s Kingdom, God’s realm right here and now.
- God promises us not so much descendants but a family, a community within which we can belong: A father in God, in whom we can trust; a brother in Christ to whom we can relate always, so that we are never alone. This is the one who comes to us and says “Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest (this is his promise); take my yoke upon you and learn from me . . . with me you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30). This is the one who says “I will never fail you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:6); and who says to us “I will be with you always, always, to the end of time” (Matt. 28:20). You belong in this family, and I will be a part of your life forever. This is a pledge of God made to us through Jesus Christ.
- This is a God who continues to promise, to guide and protect us as he did with Abraham. So that if God was a shepherd to Abraham, Jesus the Son of God becomes the Good Shepherd,

whose word and path you and I are to follow. And when Jesus says “I am the way!” (John 14:6) he is surely picking up on the story of Abraham, as if to say, “*Like Abraham, you may not know where you are going, you may not know the way – but, know this, that I am the way. I will not tell you everything about the path and the destination, but follow me and I will make sure you will be safe and sound, leading a life that you will never ever regret.*”

Remember the promise in John 10:27-29? “*My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life [and here is a promise]: they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.*” [The journey may be dangerous but it is secure.] *What my Father has given me is greater than all else and no one can snatch it out of my Father’s hand.*

- And this promise-making God promises, as well, as with Abraham, that your life and mine small as they may seem to be, will become a source of blessing to others. The word used most commonly for this in the New Testament is the word “fruitful” – picking up from the Psalms: that our lives will be fruitful. Fruit is there not just to look nice, but for others to pick and eat, and to benefit from. And Jesus says (John 15:1-10): “*I am the true vine. Abide in me, live in me as I live in you and your lives will bear fruit. Those who abide in me and I in them (promises Jesus) will bear much fruit.*”

Promises are everywhere in the scripture. To be sure, there are promises in Scripture before the story of Abraham (for example, in the story of Noah), but the whole idea that God is a promise-making God becomes so profoundly prominent in Abraham that that’s the place to turn to say:

“Is this the nature of my God? and the basis of my faith too?” Is this the God in whom I believe? . . . a God who speaks to a person like me, who calls a person like me, who wants to give direction to a person like me, and who will give a firm foundation for my life, in which I can trust? . . . gives to me promises on the basis of which I can place my life, and from there venture out – not just remain in a holy huddle, but venture out into this world which God so loves and to which he sent his Son.

This is the story of Abraham. This is the God in whom he believed. Abraham, providing the paradigm for our faith – while at the same time struggling with faith, growing in faith even as we struggle and have been called to grow in faith too.

Maybe we’re mired in that struggle today, and feel like saying “I’m having a hard time, not sure if it’s worth it. God seems so slow to listen or care!” Well, Abraham has been there before you. This is the God in whom Abraham believed: enormously patient with us but always calling us to move forward with him, on his schedule, not ours, not merely as a passenger in our car, but as the driver leading and directing the way. Come, he says, follow me. I’ll keep you safe – I give you my promises . . . but you need to step out in faith, as Abraham did and you will never ever regret it.

APPENDIX – PROMISES

Genesis

Promises of Descendants: Genesis 12:2, 13:16; 15:4-6; 17:4-7; 18:10

Promises of Land 12:1, 13:14-15,17; 15:7,18; 17:8

Greek for Earth/Land – “*ge*” (as in “ge-ology”)

Call to be a blessing for all the families of the *earth*: Genesis 12:2-3

Abraham’s Faith: Genesis 12:4; 15:6 . . and doubt . . Genesis 12:10-20, 17:17

New Testament:

Romans 4; Galatians 3; Hebrews 11:8 Abraham, the model of Christian faith

John 14:1-7 Jesus as the “Way” into the unknown = the Abrahamic path to follow

Matthew 5:5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (=“*ge*”)

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

Matthew 3:8 “God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham” (John the Baptist)

PROMISES OF GOD SCRIPTURE

2 Peter 1:4 God has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature.

AN ETERNAL AND SECURE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

John 3:16 God so loved the world (*kosmos*) that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but should have eternal life.

Romans 5:8-10 God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us . . . If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.

I Corinthians 15:3 For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psalms 103:2-3 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits— who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases

John 10:27-28 My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

Romans 8:38-39 Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

GOD’S COMPANIONSHIP AND HELP

Matthew 28:20 I will be with you always, to the close of the age

Deuteronomy 31:8 It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.” (Hebrews 13:5)

Isaiah 41:10 Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper (the Holy Spirit), to be with you forever.

II Corinthians 12:9 The Lord said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

I Corinthians 10:13 No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

GUIDANCE

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not look to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge God, and he will make straight your paths.

Psalms 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;

James 1:5 If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.

PROVISION and PROTECTION

Psalms 46:1-2 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change . . .

Matthew 6:30 If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

Psalms 37:4 Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalms 84:11 No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Philippians 4:19 God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

PEACE

Matthew 11:28-29 “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

John 14:1-3 “***Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.***

In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

FULFILLMENT

Romans 8:28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

I Corinthians 15:57 Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 24 Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only wise God our savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be all honor, glory, power and dominion, from this day forward and for ever more.

Psalms 92:12-14 The righteous flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. In old age they still produce fruit.

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