

**Coastal Sermon Notes: Genesis 23:1-20**  
**The Grave that Speaks of Hope: November 2, 2025**

**Intro: Note the emotional shift:**

- Last week: Abraham on Mount Moriah, knife raised over Isaac, the ram caught in the thicket. High drama. This week? Real estate negotiations and burial arrangements.
- After Genesis 22's high intensity, Genesis 23 feels like, well, police paperwork."
- A Puzzling Question: "Why does buying a cave get an entire chapter in the Bible? What's so important about this transaction that God includes every detail?"
- This "boring" chapter reveals what Abraham's faith looks like in the everyday, painful, mundane moments of his life." That's what we get from this chapter. His faith is on full display.

**The Structure:** Today we will focus on "Five faith movements" that illustrate what faith does when life gets hard and promises still seem so distant."

**1. Faith Grieves Honestly: Genesis 23:1-2**

- 1        Now **Sarah**  
          **lived one hundred and twenty-seven years;**  
          *these were the years of the life of Sarah.*
- 2        **Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron)**  
          in the land of Canaan;  
          and **Abraham** went in to **mourn for Sarah**  
          and to **weep for her**.

**POINT 1: FAITH GRIEVES HONESTLY (v. 1-2)**

**a. Faith doesn't skip grief**

- **Sarah lived a full life—127 years.** Unusual for the age of the woman to be included in the Bible at death. This reminds us how significant Sarah was in God's Great Promises. She's in hall of faith.
- **She dies in Kiriath-arba (Hebron)**—in the land of promise
- Abraham mourns and weeps—the Hebrew is vivid, public grief

**b. The cultural context:**

- **Mourning was public**, demonstrative
- **Abraham doesn't hide** his pain
- **He doesn't spiritualize or repress his grief away.** i.e. "He or she is in a better place."

**c. Faith doesn't deny reality.** It doesn't say 'God is sovereign' and skip the tears.

- **Abraham weeps. Jesus wept** at Lazarus's tomb.
- **But biblical faith includes honest grief before God.**
- **You can trust God AND be heartbroken** at the same time."

**d. It's so important to grieve.** One of the worst things you can do is **repress grief**. This comes back to haunt you in different ways. I have seen it affect my oldest brother when my father passed away. He did not express his grief. He was numb. It can lead to detachment from oneself and others. It can also interfere with joy and confidence. It can lead to doubt, inability to express feelings, and solitude. Withholding grief often leads to depression, anxiety, and outbursts over small things.

## 2. Faith acts in Grief: Genesis 23:3-6

3. Then Abraham rose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying,
4. "I am a **stranger** and a **sojourner** among you; give me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

5. **The sons of Heth (Hittites)** answered Abraham, saying to him,
6. "Hear us, my lord, you are a **mighty prince** among us; **bury your dead** in the **choicest of our graves**; **none of us** will refuse you his grave for burying your dead."

### POINT 2: FAITH ACTS IN GRIEF

- a. "Abraham rose from before his dead" (v. 3)—he gets up
- He doesn't collapse into paralysis
  - He identifies a need and takes a practical step
  - He asks for help: Give me a plot.
- b. The "stranger and sojourner" language is crucial: "Notice what Abraham says: 'I am a stranger and sojourner among you' (v. 4). He knew this was not his home. He knew that eventually there would be a city for him with foundations, whose architect and builder was God (Hebrews 11:10).
- Think about this: Abraham has been in Canaan for over 60 years at this point
    - Abraham entered Canaan at age 75 (Genesis 12:4)
    - Sarah dies at 127, making Abraham 137
    - That's 62 years in this land
  - After more than six decades, Abraham **STILL** doesn't own property
  - He still identifies as a foreigner, a sojourner
- c. Faith doesn't mean you have all the answers or should always feel strong.
- It means you take the next faithful step, even in the fog of grief.
  - Sometimes that step is just asking for help.
  - Sometimes it's making arrangements, calling a friend, getting out of bed
  - Small acts of obedience when you're barely holding it together—**that's faith**"
- d. Illustration: When my Little Brother Darren died: taking small faithful steps during grief—planning a funeral, doing the PowerPoint, raising money, flying to Tacoma, even when numb.

### 3. Faith Navigates Culture Carefully: Genesis 23:7-11

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| <p>7. So <b>Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land</b>,<br/>the sons of Heth.</p> <p>8 And he spoke with them, saying,<br/>“<b>If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me,</b></p> <p>9. <b>that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns</b>,<br/>which is at the end of his field;<br/>for the full price let him give it to me<br/>in your presence for a burial site.”</p> | <p>10. Now <b>Ephron</b> was sitting<br/>among the sons of Heth;<br/>and <b>Ephron the Hittite</b> answered<br/><b>Abraham</b> in the <b>hearing of the sons of Heth</b>; <i>even</i> of all who went in at the<br/><b>gate of his city</b>, saying,</p> <p>11. “<b>No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.</b>”</p> |
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#### POINT 3: FAITH NAVIGATES CULTURE CAREFULLY

- a. **Faith understands cultural dynamics without compromising:** Now Abraham hasn't always been great at navigating foreign cultures.
  - **Remember Genesis 12?** He goes to Egypt during a famine, panics, and lies about Sarah being his sister. Nearly disastrous.
  - **Remember Genesis 20?** He does the SAME THING in Gerar with Abimelech.
  - **But here?** He's learned. He's grown. Watch how he does it RIGHT this time."
- b. **What Abraham does well:**
  - **He shows respect** (v. 7) - He bows to the Hittites
  - **He understands the setting** - Business happens at the **city gate publicly**, with **witnesses**
  - **He makes his request clearly** (v. 8-9) - "For the **full price** let him give it to me"
  - **He reads Ephron's response correctly** (v. 10-11).
- c. **The Cultural Trap:** "Ephron's response sounds incredibly generous:
  - 'I GIVE you the field'
  - 'I GIVE you the cave'
  - 'In the presence of my people I GIVE it to you'
- d. **But in the Ancient Near Eastern culture**, accepting land as a 'gift' wasn't really free:
  - **You might owe feudal service**—military obligations, labor, tribute
  - **Future ownership** could be disputed
  - **You'd be socially indebted**—expected to reciprocate with loyalty and favors
  - **Abraham sees the trap. A 'free' gift comes with strings attached.** He'll be Ephron's man, **NOT** God's man."
- e. **Practical Examples:** In the workplace, be professional, Relational. Respectful. Participate—but don't compromise ethics to climb the ladder. Abraham shows you can bow without bending, engage without entangling."

**In your family life, model goodness toward others.** Be above reproach in your character. Apologize when wrong. Teach your children with words and action the importance of making tome for God.

#### 4. Faith Refuses to Barter: Genesis 23:12-16

12 And **Abraham** bowed  
before the people of the land.  
13 **He spoke to Ephron**  
**in the hearing of the people of the**  
**land,**  
saying, "If you will only please listen to  
me;  
**I will give the price of the field,**  
**accept *it* from me**  
**that I may bury my dead there."**  
14 Then **Ephron** answered Abraham,  
saying to him,

15 **"My lord, listen to me;**  
**a piece of land**  
**worth four hundred shekels of silver,**  
**what is that between me and you?**  
**So bury your dead."**  
16 **Abraham listened to Ephron;**  
**and Abraham weighed out for Ephron**  
**the silver which he had named**  
**in the hearing of the sons of Heth,**  
**four hundred shekels of silver,**  
**commercial standard.**

#### POINT 4: FAITH REFUSES TO BARTER

##### a. Key Insight: Faith refuses shortcuts, even expensive ones

- **Abraham is INSISTING on paying. In that culture, this is almost insulting**—you're rejecting someone's generosity. But Abraham won't budge."
- **Ephron** "My lord, listen to me! A piece of land worth FOUR HUNDRED SHEKELS of silver—what is THAT between you and me? So bury your dead!" (v. 15)

##### b. "Four hundred shekels. Let me put that in perspective:

- **Jeremiah** bought an entire field for **17 shekels** (Jeremiah 32:9)
- **David** bought a threshing floor with oxen for **50 shekels** (2 Samuel 24:24)
- **Abraham** is being quoted **400 shekels**. And remember—Abraham lived EARLIER than David and Jeremiah. Things should cost LESS in his time, not more.
- **Either this property is exceptionally valuable**, or Ephron just quoted him 8-20 times fair market value."

##### c. **Abraham's Response:** He weighs out Four Hundred Shekels of Silver for Ephron. The commercial standard, which deals with weighing it. No haggling. No negotiation. Paid in full. Immediately." Deal done. This isn't the first time Abraham has refused a 'generous offer.'

- **Remember Genesis 14?** After Abraham rescued Lot, the king of Sodom offered him all the spoils of war—keep everything!
- **Genesis 14:23:** 'I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread, a sandal strap, or anything that is yours, so you can never say, "I made Abram rich."' (Genesis 14:22-23)

##### d. **Same principle here.** Abraham's blessing comes from God alone. He will not be indebted to human patrons—no matter how generous they seem." Abraham could have saved a fortune. But he wouldn't compromise. Why?

- **Integrity** - He wanted clear, legal ownership with no strings
- **Freedom** - He refused to be anyone's vassal or client
- **Testimony** - No one could claim they made Abraham rich
- **Faith** - His blessing comes from God, not human favors"

## 5. Faith IS a Downpayment for the Future: Genesis 23:17-18

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| <p>17 <b>So Ephron's field,</b><br/> <b>which was in Machpelah,</b><br/> <b>which faced Mamre,</b><br/> <b>the field and cave which was in it,</b><br/> <b>and all the trees which</b><br/> <b>were in the field, that were within</b><br/> <b>all the confines of its border,</b><br/> <b>were deeded over</b></p> <p>18 <b>to Abraham for a possession</b><br/> <b>in the presence of the sons of Heth,</b><br/> <b>before all</b><br/> <b>who went in at the gate of his city.</b></p> | <p>19 <b>After this,</b><br/> <b>Abraham buried Sarah his wife</b><br/> <b>in the cave</b><br/> <b>of the field at Machpelah</b><br/> <b>facing Mamre (that is, Hebron)</b><br/> <b>in the land of Canaan.</b></p> <p>20 <b>So the field</b><br/> <b>and the cave that is in it,</b><br/> <b>were deeded over to Abraham</b><br/> <b>for a burial site</b><br/> <b>by the sons of Heth.</b></p> |
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### POINT 5: FAITH IS A DOWNPAYMENT FOR THE FUTURE (v. 17-20)

- a. Faith makes down payments on promises not yet fulfilled
- b. Notice the Detailed Legal Language: It's ironclad. This belongs to Abraham.
  - Ephron's field in Machpelah
  - Facing Mamre
  - The field AND the cave
  - All the trees within the borders
  - Deeded over to Abraham
  - Witnesses: in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate
- c. The irony: After 62 years in Canaan, Abraham's FIRST owned property is... a grave. Not a palace. Not farmland. Not a vineyard. Just a burial plot. Think about that. Abraham's first real estate in the Promised Land is a tomb. He's investing in a future he won't see in his lifetime."
- d. The Connection to Genesis 15: "This investment makes even more sense when you remember Genesis 15:13-16. God told Abraham: 'Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for **four hundred years**. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with **great possessions**.' Let that sink in:
  - Abraham has no children yet when God says this
  - God's already talking about 400 years of future slavery
  - And a future exodus where they'll plunder Egypt and return
- e. Abraham knew his descendants wouldn't return to this land for 400+ years. His Timeline.
  - Abraham buys Machpelah and dies
  - Isaac is born, lives, dies
  - Jacob is born, lives, goes to Egypt with his sons
  - Joseph rises to power, dies, & forgotten ('a new king arose who did not know Joseph'—Exodus 1:8)
  - 400 years pass in slavery
  - Moses leads the Exodus
  - They return to Canaan with plunder, just as God promised.

Abraham would never see it. Isaac wouldn't see it. Jacob wouldn't see it. But centuries later, it happened exactly as God said."

**Hebrews 11:9-10, 12-13** By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

<sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

f. **The significance of Machpelah:** When Abraham buys this burial plot, he's doing more than buying a grave. He's:

- **Planting a flag:** 'This land belongs to my family'
- **Making a down payment on God's promise**
- **Investing in a future 400+ years away**
- **Testifying: 'We're coming back here!!!'**
- **Machpelah means double of pairing. The Patriarchs** and their pairing were buried there. Abraham and Sarah. Isaac and Rebekah. Jacob and Leah (the mother of Judah).

**Application:** "What are you investing in that you won't see completed?"

- Raising children who will impact a world you'll never see
- Building a church for generations you'll never meet
- Living with integrity when no one's watching because it matters to God
- Planting trees whose shade you'll never sit under

**Faith doesn't just think about your lifetime. It thinks generationally.**

Abraham's faithfulness mattered 400 years later. Your faithfulness matters beyond your lifetime."

## CONCLUSION: THE EMPTY TOMB

**"Abraham bought a tomb believing God's promise that he would be the father of many nations. He couldn't see it. But he believed it.**

**Centuries later, a descendant of Abraham—Jesus the Messiah—was laid in a borrowed tomb. And when He rose, the promise came true: People from every nation—Jew and Gentile, slave and free, every tribe and tongue—became Abraham's spiritual children through faith in Christ.** You're part of the 'many nations.' You're one of 'all the families of the earth' blessed through Abraham's seed.

**Abraham bought that grave with YOU in his future.** Machpelah testifies to multi-generational faith. But it also testifies to **multi-national hope**—the hope that God would gather a people from every corner of the earth.

**And because Jesus' tomb is empty, that hope is now reality.** You're Abraham's heir. This is your family story. And the ending is resurrection for people from every nation."