

# On Eagles' Wings Pt 98

by Don Courville

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*The sermon explores the true meaning of Christmas through the lens of Abraham's faith and God's ultimate sacrifice of Jesus, urging listeners to prioritize their relationship with God over materialism.*

**Duration:** 27:40

**Scripture:** Genesis 14:22, Genesis 15:2, Genesis 17:1-6, Genesis 18:10-15, Genesis 22:7

**Topics:** "Radio Show"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Abraham and his faithfulness to God. The sermon highlights the intense struggle Abraham faced when God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac. Despite the agony and confusion, Abraham ultimately obeyed God's command, believing that God would fulfill His promises. The preacher draws parallels between Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, emphasizing the importance of trust and obedience in our relationship with God.

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## Transcript

Well, I welcome you back again today on Eagle's Wings. I have a little Christmas message for you today. It might be a little bit different from what you've ever heard, but if you listen, I think God will bless your heart.

And I want to start off with a passage of Scripture in Matthew, in chapter 1, in verse 1 and 2. This is the beginning of the Christmas message. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac.

And then when we slip down to verse 23, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us. This is a special time of the year. The children get all excited.

I remember growing up, making that trip up to my grandmother's from central Louisiana up into southern Arkansas to a little old town called Buckner, Arkansas. And I remember on Christmas Eve how we would either go over to the Methodist Church or the Baptist Church and there would be a big Christmas tree and all the presents, the kids would go put all their presents under the tree and then you'd get to go up and draw one, either from the boy pile or the girl pile, depending on which category you fit in. A lot of fun.

And this happened a long time ago. Christmas is memories. Christmas has something special about it.

Even though today it's so paganized and so commercialized, and so watered down to where you hardly see the meaning anymore, it still means a lot to us. Because Jesus came into this world to die on the cross for our sins. He who has God has every gift.

And we think about giving gifts and exchanging gifts and all the that goes along with that and whatever your tradition is. I know when I was growing up I was greatly bothered and I used to sit there while everybody tore into their presents and watch. And then after they were all done, they'd look over at me and I still had my presents.

This is after I got up to be a teenager. When I was a kid, of course, I was a... I usually had them opened up before Christmas and shut back again if I could get away with it. But I would just sit there and watch and I wondered, do we remember you, Lord? Do we remember you? You know, he who has God has every gift.

If you have every gift, what else do you need? We are sometimes very possessive of things. You know, Adam and Eve had everything and they lost it all. But the saddest was that they lost God himself.

They lost that special walk with God and they never got it back. There have been men and women that have walked with God very close. And I believe that God's plan has been to move us back to himself, to get us back to a position and he's accomplished this through the cross at Calvary and we should stay there at the cross.

Everything in our life should center around the cross and its meaning to us. But God's plan to move us back into a relationship with him was the cross. And if you don't understand the cross, you don't understand Christmas at all.

You've missed it. Christmas isn't a cradle. And Christmas isn't the crown.

Christmas, the meaning of it, was the cross. That God came into this world to die on the cross for our sins. Do you know that I think Abraham understood Christmas? Not the cradle part, but the cross part.

And the best way many times to appreciate a gift is to go without it for a long period of time and then to get it. And then to lose it and then to get it again. And this is what happened with Abraham with his son Isaac.

And today somehow we've missed a lot because of the commercialism. Christmas has replaced Christ. God's gifts are more important than God to many of us.

And the ceremonies are more important than the person of God himself. I'd like to take you through this morning and give you a little insight into Abraham's understanding of Christmas. And maybe this will give you some new thoughts for this week as you prepare for Christmas.

You see, I believe that Abraham understood Christmas because of what God kept from him and because of what God gave him and then because of what God took away from him and then gave him back again. Abraham had a desire for a son and he waited almost a hundred years for that son. Abraham loved God and God was his friend.

And if I can give you a little bit of background to bring you up into the story that I want to share with you about Abraham. Abraham loved God and the scripture says that in Genesis 11, 30, that Sarai was barren. She had no child.

And if you understand the culture of that day in that part of the world, it was very important for the woman to have a child. To go barren was a real reproach. And Sarai had no child.

In Genesis 12, God came along and he promised him that he would give him a son. He said, get out of your country, leave your kinsmen from your father's house, go to a land that I will show thee, thee and I will make of thee a great nation. I will bless thee and make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing.

And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that cursed thee. And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. But he still had no child.

And in verse 7, God appeared unto him, the Lord appeared unto him and said, unto thy seed will I give this land. And there he built an altar unto the Lord. You go down to chapter 13, 14, and 16.

And again God promised the land to his seed. You go down to chapter 14. Now to verse 22, it says that Abraham looked to God for everything.

He had a walk with God because at one point he delivered his nephew Lot and he was offered a reward and he said, I won't take it. I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth. In other words, he's saying, God provides all my needs.

No thank you. I don't beg and I don't steal. I just take what God gives to me.

And you come down to chapter 15 in verse 2. And Abraham said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me? Seeing I go childless and the steward of mine house is this Eliezer of Damascus. He didn't have a child, but yet God had promised the land to his seed. What will you give me? I've got a little six year old that loves getting gifts.

And she's wondering, what am I going to get for Christmas? What will I get for my birthday? And she starts wondering that 11 or 12 months ahead of her birthday. She loves to get gifts. We like to get gifts.

You give me a gift and I'll probably take it. Someone gives you one, you'll probably take it. We don't refuse gifts.

And God was approached one day by Abraham. And Abraham said, what wilt thou give me? Seeing I go childless. In verse 3, Abraham said, behold, to me thou hast given no seed.

What are you going to do, Lord? You ever got to that point in your life where there was just nothing and all you have left is just God? And you look to him and you say, what are you going to do, Lord, about this? Many times I believe that God lets us get back up into the corner, right up down to the wire, because he wants us to come to him. And you come over to chapter 16. There was a great tragedy in Abraham's life as he tried to provide for himself what God had already told him that he would provide.

And you come to chapter 17 and 1 through 6. When Abraham was ninety years old, ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abraham and he said to him, I am the almighty God. Walk before me and be thou perfect. I will make my covenant between me and thee and will multiply thee exceedingly.

And Abraham fell on his face and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with you and you shall be a father of many nations. And neither shall your name any more be called Abraham, but thy name shall be called be Abraham. For a father of many nations have I made thee, and I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

This was a God loving his friend Abraham. You come over to chapter 18 of Genesis and verses 10 through 15. And again, God visits them.

And if I might say that in 1719, God had said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son. God had repeated this in chapter 18 in verse 10. Sarah thy wife shall have a son.

In verse 14, Sarah shall have a son. And you know the story how Sarah was old, ninety years old, and she laughed. And this didn't go over too well with God.

One of the things he said was, Is anything too hard for me? What about your life? Is anything too hard for God? And you know how the story ended up. God gave them a little baby. And they named him Isaac as God had told them to do.

And so there they had their little baby, Isaac. You come over to chapter 20, verses 1 through 3 and 5. And you just have this beautiful story how they have this little boy now. Well, after Abraham received Isaac, it changed his whole life.

I like the way that A. W. Tozer told the story about Abraham. He said that Abraham was old when Isaac was born. Old enough indeed to have been his grandfather.

And the child became at once the delight and idol of his heart. He said that from that moment when he first stooped to take the tiny, awkward little boy in his arms, he was just full of eager love. He was going to be an eager love slave of his son.

And God went out of his way to comment on the strength of this affection. And it was not hard to understand. For you see, this little baby represented everything sacred to his father's heart.

The promises of God, the covenants, the hopes of the years, and the long messianic dream was all in this little son. And so as Abraham watched him grow from babyhood to young manhood, the heart of the old man was knit closer and closer with the life of his son. You see, his life was bound up in his son, till at last the relationship bordered upon the perilous, as Tozer said.

It was then that God stepped in to save both father and son from the consequences of an unclean love. And God stepped in, and you know the story in Genesis 22, how he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah. And offer him therefore a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of.

And we are not given a lot of the details of the close-up agony of that night on the slopes near Beersheba, when that old man had it out with his God. But as Tozer said, Respectful imagination may view in awe the bent form and convulsive wrestlings alone under the stars. Possibly not again until a greater than Abraham, wrestled in the garden of Gethsemane, did such mortal pain visit a human soul.

If only the man himself might have been allowed to die, that would have been easier a thousand times, for he was old now, and to die would have been no great ordeal for one who had walked so long with God. Besides, it would have been at last sweet pleasure to let his dimming vision rest upon the figure of his stalwart son, who would live to carry on the Abrahamic line, and fulfill in himself the promises of God, that God had made to him long before in Ur of Chaldees. How could he? How should he slay the lad? Even if he could get the consent of his wounded and protesting heart, how could he reconcile the act with the promise? And if you can just take your imagination and imagine all the promises that God had given to

Abraham, that in his son would be the seed, that he would bless the whole world, and now God is asking him to take his only son and sacrifice him.

In Isaac shall thy seed be called. This was Abraham's trial by fire, and like the Lord Jesus Christ, he did not fail in the crucible. And it's imagined that while the stars still shone like the sharp white points above the tent, where the sleeping Isaac lay, long before the gray dawn had begun to lighten the east, the old saint had made up his mind.

He would offer his son as God had directed him to do, and then trust God to raise him from the dead. This is what the writer to the Hebrews has given to us, was his conclusion. This was the solution of his aching heart.

He'd come to the conclusion that the only thing possible was that God would raise him in the dead. And so, early in the morning, he rose to carry out the plan, and it's beautiful to see that while he erred to see God's method, he had correctly sensed the secret of God's great heart. And the solution accords well with the New Testament scripture, whosoever will lose for my sake shall find.

I don't believe there's any greater Old Testament picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ than this of Abraham's sacrifice and his son Isaac. To me, one of the next greatest is Jonah. Jonah's a whole different life, but this has the closest meaning to Calvary that I can see.

And to me, this is the closest picture of Christmas in the Old Testament. And so, if we can go on with the story, God let the suffering old man go through with it. You say, what a cruel God.

No, my friend, what a loving God. He let him go through with it up to the point where he knew there would be no retreat. And then he broke in on the scene, and he said, don't lay your hand on the boy.

And if you can imagine the old bewildered patriarch, oh, Abraham, he now says, in effect, God says, Abraham, it's all right. I never intended that you should actually slay the lad. I only wanted to remove him from the temple of your heart, that I might reign unchallenged there.

And if you can imagine God's speaking to him saying, man, I just wanted to correct the perversion that had existed in your love. Now you may have the boy, sound and well. Take him, go back to your tent.

Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. My friend, do we understand Christmas? Do we understand how much God loves us, and how much we have received when God gave himself on the cross of Calvary? Have we been perverted in our love? Have we come to the point to where Christmas is just a pagan thing that we go along with? And whatever kind of traditions that you have, whatever kind of rituals you go through, if you leave out love for God as a basis of all of it, you've missed it all. And right after God was through with Abraham, the scripture says that a voice opened up out of heaven, and God said, by myself have I sworn, said the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice. The old man of God, if you can imagine him lifting his head to respond to the voice, he stood there. Imagine him standing there on the mount.

He's strong and pure and grand, as Tozer said, a man marked out by the Lord for special treatment, a friend and favored of the Most High. My friend, if we will get a hold of Calvary, and let God take from us the idol out of our heart, the Isaacs out of our heart, and let him strip it away, then we can give as God gave, and we can love as God loved. But I'm afraid that there's so much giving with the expectation of, I'd better get something at least as valuable as this back from that sister of mine, or she's in trouble.

Or boy, I wish I didn't have to give this. I could sure use it myself. Where are you at? Where am I at when we have this kind of an attitude? I think we need a visit from God.

Are we willing to let him take our Isaac? How far are we willing to go? Are we willing to go all the way and plunge the knife into our idol and say, God, you can have it. All I want is you. And now he was a man, wholly surrendered, a man utterly obedient, this Abraham was, a man who possessed nothing.

As Tozer said, he had consecrated his all in the person of his dear son, and God had taken it from him. God could have begun out on the margin of Abraham's life and worked inward to the center. You know, he could have chose rather to cut quickly around the edges and just sort of work in, but instead he just cut quickly right at the heart of Abraham.

And he had it over in one sharp act of separation. Many of us won't let God come into our heart, and he's out chopping on the edges of the borders, and that's as far as we'll let him come. And he wants to come in all the way.

You see, he doesn't want to share the sanctuary of your heart with an idol. You know, if you study the New Testament, the word for temple that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit is the word for holy of holies. God, in many of our holy of holies, has been moved out by idols, and nothing probably will expose it more than the covetousness, the materialism of Christmas.

If you miss the cross, you miss Jesus. If you miss Jesus, you've missed life. Because the scripture says, he that has the son has life, and he that has not the son does not have life.

Christmas is giving and receiving because God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Believing is receiving, and many of us are not receiving from God because we're not believing. And so we can go through a Christmas season, a wonderful time where we remember how much Jesus loved us and how he came down and was born in that old stinky stall where animals stood, and dung was dropped, and he was laid as a new little baby in a little pile of straw somewhere.

And he came into the world in the humblest form. And some of us have our nice beds that we sleep in. And we can see somebody in church that maybe doesn't even have a bed, and we can say, God bless you, brother.

And the scripture says, how does the love of God dwell in your heart when you can say that? We have gone a long, long ways away from Calvary. We have gone and unless we understand the love of God, we've missed Christmas. This old man Abraham, God loved him too much to let him go with this idol.

I have said that Abraham possessed nothing, Tozer said. Yet was not this poor man rich? Everything he had owned was still his to enjoy. He had all the sheep.

He had all the camels. He had all the herds. He had all the goods of every sort.

He had also his wife and his friends, but best of all, he now had his son, Isaac, safe by his side. He had everything, and get this, but he possessed nothing. And that's the key of Christmas, is to have everything but yet to possess.

Nothing. That's the spiritual secret of Christmas. God had everything, but yet he was willing to give up his most precious possession, his son, for you and me.

There is the sweet theology, as Tozer said, of the heart, which can be learned only in the school of renunciation. And the spirit of Christmas is the spirit of giving when it hurts. Many of us give, and it doesn't hurt in the right way.

We give, and it hurts because we're covetous. Or we give because it hurts in that we know that the person we're giving to can't give back to us as much. And let me challenge you in these closing moments to examine your heart before God as you prepare for this week.

Are you willing to give and have it hurt, and just look into the face of God and say, I love you, and I give this because I love you? God so loved that he gave. You'll never be more like God than when you love and when you give. And after that bitter and blessed experience, the words my and mine probably were very few times on the lips of Abraham.

The sense of possession which those two words connote were probably gone from his heart. Things were taken out of his life. Even his own son was not something that he would covet to the point of idolatry any more.

All he possessed was God. In closing, let me challenge you to get to know the God of Abraham. This God of Abraham was a man of the word.

He was the one that the scripture says his name shall be called Emmanuel, which means God with us. What a wonderful thing to have God with us. And remember in closing, Jesus Christ is all you need.

He's the only gift you need. He's the all you need. He's all you want.

And what will it take plus Jesus to make you happy? Till next time, I trust that God will richly bless you, my friend.

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