

ROMANS PT. 4

Children of Abraham

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, November 23, 2025
PASSAGES	Genesis 1; Job 2; Job 42; Ephesians 2
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:49:16 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The gods of Israel's neighbors were hungry, tired and easily annoyed, and the people who worshipped them had nothing to say when life hurt. The God of Genesis needs nothing from us and made us in his image to rule alongside him. And when the one man in Scripture who suffers longest finally stands in front of him, God's answer is not an explanation — it is to lift his face.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ In the Babylonian version, humanity exists to feed gods who were tired of farming, and the flood comes because people are noisy. Genesis says we were made in God's image to rule and subdue the earth with his blessing. The contrast is not decoration; it is the point.
- ◆ God is not annoyed by our noise and is not fed by our sacrifices. Nothing in worship meets a need on his end.
- ◆ There are things worse than pain and death. Job would rather sit in the ashes than curse God, and Matt would rather die than break faith with the Lord or with his family.
- ◆ Job never found out why. God spoke out of the whirlwind and did not brief him on the two chapters the reader has already read.
- ◆ Christianity has some answers to suffering and not all of them, and Matt argued that is a mark in its favor — a system that claims every answer is a system somebody made up.

- ◆ Where the English of Job 42:9 says the Lord accepted Job's prayer, the Hebrew says he lifted up Job's face. God's answer to a sufferer is honor.
- ◆ It is impossible to earn something that is free, which is why religious people struggle most with the gospel. A good stretch goes to the head like fumes.
- ◆ Thanks given now, in pain and doubt and confusion, is an offering you will not be able to make once you stand before him in fullness of body and mind. The window is this life.

► 1:49:16

The room had already spent a long stretch of the morning saying out loud what God had done — and, in more than one case, admitting where he had not done what was asked. Matt's message came in behind all of that, and it began somewhere unexpected: with the gods of Israel's neighbors, and with what it was actually like to belong to one of them.

1. What the neighbors believed — and what Genesis says instead

► 1:49:50

In Sumer and Babylon, people grew up being told that humanity was made to feed the gods, because the gods had grown tired of farming — and that they really did eat the sacrifices. The oldest god in the family wanted to kill off the younger gods he had fathered because they were too loud. “He couldn't nap,” Matt said. “That's what it says. Couldn't get his naps in.” When he teaches his class on Genesis and assigns those texts, students come back asking why they had to read something so horrible. That reaction is the assignment. It is how you recover what you stopped noticing.

“We are not annoying God because of our noise,” Matt said, “and we don't feed him. He doesn't need these meals. He's never tired of anything, much less farming.” And the beauty runs further than the absence of insult:

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth...’ And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.’”

GENESIS 1:26–28 ↗

► 1:50:48

The Babylonians had a garbled flood story too, in which humanity was never meant to survive at all — the survivors are an accident, and the flood came because people were noisy rather than because they were wicked. Greece did no better: a god casting about for a pretext to punish humanity for nothing in particular. Neither did Egypt, which left behind documents of flat despair — why is there evil, why do bad things happen, the gods do not care about us, we may as well die.

2. Job's wife gave exactly that advice

► 1:51:19

Matt had finished reading Job the week before, and he noticed that the counsel the Egyptian scribes reached on their own shows up in Scripture on the lips of someone inside the covenant.

“Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.’ But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”

JOB 2:9–10 ↗

► 1:51:51

It mattered on this particular Sunday. The church had just finished thanking God for the ways he had come through, and had also heard people say plainly that there are times he does not answer the way they hoped. Matt's response to that was not to smooth it over but to reorder it: there are some things worse than pain and death. We rightly pray to be delivered from both, for ourselves and for the people we love. Job would rather sit in his pain than curse his God. “For me, I would rather die than be unfaithful to my vows to the Lord or to my family. I would rather die. I don't necessarily want God to free me from all pain, or let my life go on and then end up unfaithful to him.”

► 1:52:34

“To be held in his grip, surrounded by pain and suffering, is better than to be out of his grip with luxury.” And the other thing about Job, Matt pointed out, is that he never found out why. When God finally speaks out of the whirlwind, he does not open with a briefing on the first two chapters that the reader has already seen. No catching up to speed. Job lived and died without the explanation we get for free on page one.

3. Some of the answers, and all of the person

► 1:53:09

Modern people have their own accounts of why there is evil, and Matt's verdict was that they are either insufficient or misdirected. He passed along a thought from a teacher he had been reading: what makes the Christian answer compelling is that it requires nuance, and nuance is what reality actually looks like. We do have some answers for why we suffer. We do not have all of them. But we know the person who does, and we can trust that he is good.

► 1:53:39

"We don't have all of the answers to the ways we cry out to him," Matt said, "but we have him. And he's good." Then the sharper edge of it: "You can sometimes tell how made up a world system is when they act like they do have all the answers." One day we will see clearly, standing in front of him. Until then, the confidence is not that we have understood the plan but that there is a governor and not merely a spectator — "he's actually governing the universe, not just watching it."

4. He lifted up Job's face

► 1:54:14

Reading the end of Job in the NIV, Matt hit a line that stopped him. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar have been condemned and told that Job must pray for them, and the text says God answered Job's prayer. He remembered Steve making the point that Scripture never actually says God answers prayers — he answers people. So he went to the Hebrew, expecting Steve to be right, and found that he was. The phrase is that the Lord lifted up Job's face: attention, honor, particular regard, given to one particular man.

"So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer."

JOB 42:9 ↗

► 1:54:46

He had been at the worship night that week, and the image stayed with him: a woman with her eyes closed and her face up. That is what he wanted the phrase to mean in the room — what it is for God to lift a face, and how badly we want it.

► 1:55:21

"I know you want that, because you're a human. You long for honor and glory and belonging." To anyone in the room walking in shame or guilt or pain, he pointed at who Christ is for us: the friend of sinners who invites the weary to come, who gives a seat of honor in the heavenly places and

an invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb. You may feel downcast in front of your heavenly Father. He lifts your face.

5. It is impossible to earn something that is free

► 1:56:27

And none of it is barging in. “He actually extended the invitation to begin with, called it out to you before you were even born, and he lifts your face.” Which is where the Pharisees come in. Matt’s diagnosis of their trouble with Jesus was one sentence: it is impossible to earn something that is free. Religious people have the hardest time with the gospel, which is not the outcome anyone expects — “especially if you’ve been really good lately. It starts going to your head like noxious fumes. Like, wow, I have been incredible.”

► 1:56:56

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

EPHESIANS 2:8-9 ↗

The reason it comes by grace through faith, Matt said, is that grace is the only mechanism by which it could be free at all. Paul writes about people searching for glory and honor and immortality, and God hands those things over at no cost — “not free for some, but then others who can earn it. No, it’s only free. So we have to get it on his terms.”

► 1:57:32

What he kept circling was the picture rather than the mechanism: the beauty and the glory of a downcast person whose face has been lifted up.

6. A table with no agenda on it

► 1:58:05

The announcements came at the end this week rather than the front, and one of them belonged with everything above it. On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, Hope hosted the entire faculty and staff of Brentwood Elementary. Matt’s favorite detail was how they arrive: not braced, not scanning the room wondering who is about to preach at them or whether the pastor is here. “They just walk right in. They know us. They know we don’t bite.” The food is not the point — the conversation and the company are. He invited anyone who missed it to put next year on the calendar, and thanked Jolene, who

quarterbacked the whole thing and was not in the room to hear it because she had the three-year-olds' class.

► 1:58:57

The thanks kept going past Jolene — everyone who brought food, made food, served it, set up and took down the tables and chairs, decorated. “It’s a big ordeal,” he said, and then went reaching for the proverb and lost it: “It’s, you know, light hands. What is it? Many hands. Light work.” What came back was better than the proverb: “There were many hands. I don’t know if it was light work for anybody, but there were many people. Anyway, thank you. That’s what I should have just said. Stopped with that. Thank you very much.” It could not have been done by a one- or two-person team, and he said so.

7. Give thanks sacrificially, while you still can

► 1:59:26

Matt closes most weeks with a challenge — “some way for us to obey Jesus,” usually a call to pray or to repent. This week it was generosity, turned at an angle: “To give sacrificially is more blessed than to receive sacrificially.” Then he aimed it at the morning the church had just had: “The way I’m going to focus that, because of just the way we did this morning, is to give God honor sacrificially even when it’s not easy.”

► 2:00:38

The argument is about timing, and it is the best thing in the message. Right now — “before death, before we’re in Christ, after that veil, at the resurrection and judgment in the new heavens and new earth, before that time, we have a unique opportunity to praise the Lord and give him thanks even when we’re full of pain, doubt, confusion, and surrounded by death.” It is a kind of honor that will not still be available on the far side: “a special way of honoring him that when we stand before him in fullness of body and mind, we wouldn’t necessarily be able to give.” And what makes it costly is exactly what makes it possible — “to give in spite of the doubt and the confusion and the cloud that affects our judgment, when our joints hurt, when we’re super tired, when we’re riddled with pain. To be able to give the Lord thanks anyway.” The costly version of thanks has an expiration date, and it is available this week.

► 2:01:10

He prayed the church out along those lines — thanks for everything God is, has done and will do; trust in the good shepherd who guides and protects and provides, daily bread, rescue from evil, being led away from temptation, and on to still waters and green pastures — and then one last thing asked for on the way out: “Help us to know you all the more.”

► 2:01:42

He handed the room to the prayer ministry teams, who, as he never fails to mention, are genuinely hoping you come: “They would love to pray with you, and you would make their day.” Anyone who lingered was warned they might get handed a decoration instead — “you don’t have to eat pizza, you can just decorate and then go home and eat lunch, that’s fine.” And then the sentence the service actually ends on, which is the whole message pointed at the door: “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Genesis 1:26–28](#)
- [Genesis 6:5](#)
- [Job 2:9–10](#)
- [Job 38:1](#)
- [Job 1–2](#)
- [Job 42:9](#)
- [Matthew 11:19](#)
- [Matthew 11:28](#)
- [Ephesians 2:6](#)
- [Revelation 19:9](#)
- [Ephesians 1:4](#)
- [Ephesians 2:8–9](#)
- [Romans 2:7](#)
- [Acts 20:35](#)
- [Psalm 23:1](#)
- [Matthew 6:11–13](#)
- [Psalm 23:2](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt set Genesis beside the stories its neighbors were telling. Which of those older assumptions — that God is hungry, tired, or irritated by us — still shapes the way you come to him?
2. Job's wife told him to curse God and die. Where is your own version of that advice loudest right now, and who is saying it?
3. What would change for you if you actually believed that being held in God's grip in pain is better than being outside it in comfort?
4. God's answer to Job was to lift his face rather than explain himself. Where are you asking for an explanation, and what would receiving honor instead look like?
5. Matt said thanks offered in pain and confusion is an offering you will never be able to make again. What thanks will you give this week that costs you something?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVVKJVAK2rg&t=6556s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.