

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: What If My Life Had a Spoiler?

Lesson: Genesis 15:1-12

15 After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram.

*I am your shield, your very great reward."*² But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."⁴ Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir."⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."⁶ Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.⁷ He also said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."⁸ But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"⁹ So the Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."¹⁰ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.¹¹ Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.¹² As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

(Slide 1) There's a word called "spoiler." Let's imagine you're about to watch a movie. It's a movie you've been eagerly looking forward to, and finally, you've just started watching it. You're deeply engrossed, captivated by every moment, when suddenly a friend who's already seen the movie comes over and starts explaining every single scene. For example, when the main characters are facing a crisis and going through a tough time, your friend says, "Hey, don't worry at all. It looks hard now, but soon some people will show up to help them, and everything will work out. They don't die." If your friend keeps spoiling every scene like that, you'd probably find it hard to stay focused, and you wouldn't feel any tension or thrill, right? Spoilers ruin the fun, don't they? Annoyed by this constant spoiling, you might even say, "Go home!" Generally, it seems we don't like spoilers when we're watching movies or reading books.

I don't particularly like spoilers either. But I started thinking about this: What if there were spoilers for our lives? Would we like them or not? It might depend a bit on the situation or our personalities, but I had a feeling that when it comes to spoilers about life, many people would probably want to know. Most of you have been married for a long time, but let's imagine you

lost all your memories of married life and went back to one week before your wedding. How did you feel before getting married? Do you remember? That fluttering feeling? The excitement? The happiness? And at the same time, that slight anxiety about whether you might regret this choice? While you're feeling all these emotions, what if a spoiler about your upcoming married life arrived? And when you read it, it turns out to be incredibly bright, positive, and full of hope—would you still feel worried or anxious about your marriage, or not? If you read a good spoiler, you probably wouldn't feel worried or anxious anymore. You'd likely feel confident about your marriage.

It's not just about marriage. If you were about to make an investment and got a spoiler right beforehand, and that spoiler was very positive, you wouldn't worry about the investment at all. Or if you were facing surgery and the doctor told you the chances of success weren't high, but you somehow got a spoiler about the surgery and it was full of hope, you'd probably walk into the operating room with a smile. What kind of spoiler do you need in your life? For me, with my visa issues making my future in the U.S. uncertain, if I got a spoiler about my ministry that said, "Hakki Min, together with his loving family, will love and serve God and neighbors in the United Methodist Church until he retires at 72, and even after retirement, he'll serve local churches as a retired pastor until he's 90," I wouldn't have the slightest worry or concern about my current situation.

(Slide 2) Don't we all want a hopeful spoiler in the uncertain moments of our lives? There was a person in the Bible who received just such a spoiler. His name was Abram. God came to him and said, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." This wasn't the first time God had spoken to him like this. Back when Abram was still in his hometown, God came to him and gave him two spoilers: one, that he should leave his homeland and go to the land God would give him, and two, that he would become a great nation.

I'm using the word "spoiler" to make this a bit easier and more relatable for you, but you know that what God gave Abram was a promise. Abram firmly believed in God's promise and left his hometown with his family. He was 75 years old at the time. And just as God had promised, even though Abram left

his homeland, he became rich with livestock, silver, and gold. He had so much livestock that he and his nephew had to manage their herds separately, and there wasn't enough pasture or water to feed them all, leading to disputes between them. He even had 318 well-trained soldiers. In short, he followed the spoiler God gave him, left his homeland, and started a new life in a new place at a not-so-young age, but because God blessed him, he lived with great wealth. He was living a life others might envy.

But just as everyone has worries and concerns, Abram, despite living this enviable life, had one big worry. It was that he had no child to carry on his legacy. He had a wife named Sarai, but even though they'd been together for a long time, no child had been born between them. Though God had promised him that He would make him a great nation, as time passed, he and his wife grew older, and having a child seemed to become only more difficult. In those circumstances, he was worried, anxious, and perhaps even felt a sense of emptiness, knowing that despite all he possessed, he had no child to pass it on to.

When Abram honestly shared his situation with God, God took him outside and had him look up at the countless stars shining in the sky, reminding him that the One who made all of this was God, and promising that Abram's descendants would be as numerous as those stars. So Abram believed God's promise again, but it seems there was still a lingering worry in a corner of his heart. So he asked God, "How can I know that Your word will really come true?" And God had him bring three-year-old animals and present them before Him, establishing an official covenant that would never change.

Friends, how did you read and hear Abram's story? I found his uncertain situations and the way he felt small, shaken, and doubtful in front of them to be so human. At the same time, because I've had moments like that too, his story became a great comfort to me. It made me reflect on my relationship with God and helped me hold firm to my faith and heart in my own journey.

Because we are small and frail, and because our perspectives and vision are limited, when tough situations or difficult moments come into our lives, it's natural for us to sometimes feel discouraged or complain. In those times, if we had a spoiler about our lives—especially one that's positive and

hopeful—it would give us great strength to endure and overcome our circumstances.

But here's the thing: God, in His goodness, didn't give this spoiler only to Abram. The covenant God made with Abram continued to his son Isaac, then to Jacob, to Moses, to David, and through Jesus to all who believe in Him. It has been passed down and will continue to be, and that's the key message of the Bible—the message of salvation. Through Jesus, the spoiler and promise God gave us is this: our sins are forgiven through Jesus, we are God's people, and God has become our God. Our God is the One who created everything in this world, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Through Jesus, the promise God gave us has been confirmed. Friends, the spoiler for our lives has already been given. No matter what hardships come, no matter what uncertainties we face, we have this amazing promise that God will protect us to the end and lead us to eternal life.

(Slide 3) So, like Abram, let's trust in God's promise and let go of our fears and worries. Whether it's your marriage, your investments, your health, or your future that makes you anxious, God's spoiler says this: "I am your shield, your very great reward." Hold on to this covenant and step forward boldly today! Thanks be to God! Amen.