



Meditation— Genesis 13.^{1, 5-12}

¹Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south....

⁵And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. ⁶And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. ⁷And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

⁸And Abram said unto Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. ⁹Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

¹⁰And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. ¹¹Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. ¹²Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

My series of *Just Scripture* readings and meditations examines principles, attitudes, and behaviors related to social justice—just principles, attitudes, and behaviors to be adopted and unjust principles, attitudes, and behaviors to be avoided by both individuals and societies. The principles, attitudes, and behaviors that are to be adopted and are found in many of the *Just Scripture* passages are often at odds with those adopted by modern societies, including that of the United States. Today's passage is a good example of just and godly economic attitudes and behaviors that are at odds with common American economic values and behavior.

In this reading, Abraham became acutely aware of and troubled by the strong economic competition that had developed between himself and his nephew, Lot—a competition that threatened to turn aggressive and violent. Both men were wealthy. Both men possessed large flocks and herds. Both men required large swaths of land to feed their flocks and herds. If they remained in competition, it seemed, one of them must increase at the expense of the other. But Abraham, rejecting and refusing to live by the rules of a zero-sum economic game, made an extraordinary offer. He allowed Lot, his economic competitor, first choice of economic resources. Of course, Lot chose the very best pasturage for himself. Abraham willingly yielded to Lot's decision and then utilized the inferior economic resources that his economic competitor left him.

One can easily imagine the response of an American businessperson such as a Jeff Bezos or Elan Musk or Warren Buffet to this scenario. They would think Abraham preposterous. Indeed, we have recently witnessed Buffet's attitudes and behaviors toward economic "competitors" in how he and his fellow administrators treated their railroad employees. The attitude and behavior of the Bezos and Musk toward

employees, i.e., competitors for resources, are legendary and diametrically opposed to those of Abraham. One can also anticipate the response of the modern economist: “Abraham’s economic decision in this instance was and is impractical, irresponsible, and ignorant. A recipe for ruin and loss.”

While the specifics of Abraham’s economic *circumstances* differ from those of modern times, we should have no difficulty finding *principles* that can apply to today’s economic circumstances. First, Abraham demonstrates how the just and godly man can and should reject the zero-sum lie of modern economic theory. It is not inevitable that the success of one necessarily limits or diminishes the success of another. Abraham seems to have understood and accepted God’s stipulation that “the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare.”¹ Greed, of course, rejects this stipulation, never able to possess enough.

Second, Abraham demonstrates that profits and profit margins are less important than human beings and human relationships. Indeed, profits and profit margins are immaterial to God; “for what,” He asks, “is property unto me?”² Consistent with Paul’s admonition, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,”³ the just and godly accept and act upon the belief that other’s right to succeed are as legitimate and to be as valued and prioritized as that of one’s own.

Third, profits and profit margins never justify economically aggressive or violent behavior. One must always choose peace with others and stability for society over personal gain and profit.

Finally, Abraham teaches us that God can be trusted; that He honors those who prioritize respecting other’s rights, preserving other’s dignity, granting the legitimacy of other’s financial needs, and maintaining peace with others above personal gain, profits, and profit margins.

There can be no doubt that the world would be a better place with more individuals like Abraham. The people of God, often spoken of as the seed of Abraham, are to follow his example, understanding that Abraham followed the example of his God who, upon coming to earth, would put the good of all others above his own. He did so during that brief span of time because it is who He always had been and ever will be.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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¹ DC 104.⁷

² DC 117.⁴

³ Philippians 2.⁴