

Alien'ation

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So tell me...When you hear the word Alien, what's the first thing that comes to mind? Well if you're anything like me and you're into science fiction, we've seen so many types of aliens in the movies and TV screens. Some were funny, some were absolutely scary, some were lovable, some were just plain cheesy, and some were just out of this world.

Well that word is not something that's in movies or the news, but you will find in a different context throughout Bible such as in Exodus, Job, Deuteronomy, Psalms and the idea of the word the same throughout.

Alien is a foreign-**born** resident. In other words...A stranger born in a strange land. And the Bible has a lot to say about this word that I believe is helpful for us to better view our place in this world and the thought process when it comes to making divine decisions in our lives.

Our attitudes and or choices can both be better aligned with God's word by understanding what it means to live in alienation which is the title of today's sermon.

So we will be revisiting with our old friend and patriarch Abraham in Genesis Chapter 23. Now I have to say...on the surface, there's **not** a lot of juicy things in this portion of scripture.

In fact, I've read this part of scripture hundreds of times and remember hearing messages concerning things like, the loss of a loved one and so on, but this time it spoke something to my heart that I really was not expecting. That we are called to be strangers and to be sojourners in this world and Abraham who was the father of our faith...lived such a life.

So let's read.... (Stand)

Genesis 23:1 - Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. She died in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her. **3** Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites. He said, **4** "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead." **5** The Hittites replied to Abraham, **6** "Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead." **7** Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. **8** He said to them, "If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf **9** so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you." **10** Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham **11** "No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead." **12** Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land **13**

and he said to Ephron, I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there.”

14 Ephron answered Abraham, **15** “Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between you and me? Bury your dead.” **16** Abraham agreed to Ephron’s terms and weighed out for him the price he had named: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants.

Now we learn several things here:

The beloved matriarch Sarah has died. She had lived to be a 127 years old. Does anyone here know what the name Sarah means? Her name means princess. And she was a princess. The love and relationship that Abe and Sarah had was nothing short of amazing. All that they have seen and accomplished and they did it together through thick and thin.

Now this is the first mention of the word mourn in the bible. And so Abraham, for the love of his princess wife, wanted to bury her in this promised land even though tradition stated that she would have been born in her own home land. And so he sought to buy a piece of land so he could bury her there in a cave.

Show pic of the outside of the cave - show cave

Now this is the place where it is strongly believed by Christians, Muslims and Jews where Sarah was buried. It’s called the Cave of the Patriarchs” located in Hebron

and traditions says that not only both Abraham and Sarah were buried there but also Isaac and Rebekah and Jacob and Leah as well are buried there.

But there was a question I had...Why didn't Abraham allow Ephron (the owner of the land), give him the cave like he offered? Instead Abraham refused and said, no...I want to purchase it from you full price.

The answer to that is what Abraham called himself. He called himself.... A stranger and a sojourner.

Soto explain let's start with this first word...STRAANGER!

Now most of us would admit that there are times where we felt extremely out of place in our lives. I remember years ago being invited to a Christmas party at a friend's parents' house. And I said yes to going without thinking it through. So I had to go.

I decided that I wasn't going to go all out on a gift, because I didn't really know these people. So I'm there and I already felt kind of uncomfortable...you know...like the feeling where you don't want to eat all the food that's laid out on the table the way YOU REALLY WANT TO EAT THE FOOD THAT'S LAID OUT ON THE TABLE.

But the worst is, when it came time to open the gifts, I thought I was safe by at least bringing something. But people were whipping out like Flat screen TVs and Keurig machines that talk and certificates of stars they had named after them.

Then they get to my gift...So now the rest of the night, I feel completely alienated from everyone else. I was a stranger in that house. And that's the very definition of a stranger according to Webster's.

Definition 1-one in the house of another as a guest, visitor, or intruder.

Definition 2- A resident alien.

But as the definition suggests if an alien is a foreign born resident and a stranger, what does that say to us born again Christ followers? I mean we were reborn not of flesh...but of Spirit. So that makes us an alien! And I'm sure there are those of us who may have felt like aliens in this world as well.

Maybe you're out with friends and they are telling jokes that you can't take part in, or the guys are making comments about the chest size of the girl in the next room, and you feel out of place because you don't think like them anymore. You don't have the same goals and desires. When they want to go partying and getting drunk and go carousing, but because you are a Christian, you don't want to join them. But the problem is...we hate to be strange. We hate to be show ducks **alienated** from the crowd.

Think of it. Have you ever moved to a new city or community and you feel out of place?

But after living for a while in that place, people usually become more and more comfortable. Why? Because they adjust, and may even adopt some of the customs and

traditions and even accents of their new home. In time, they no longer feel like strangers, and that's the problem.

As far as our time here on this earth as Christians...

God doesn't want us to adopt the customs of the world so we don't feel like strangers.

God doesn't want us to speak the same manner as the world so we fit in.

He doesn't want us to joke the way they joke or have goals that they have.

Why?? God calls us to be unique...to be special...to be a peculiar people.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should declare the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light . . . 1 Peter 2:9 (KJV)

We are as Christ followers, peculiar...we are strange... we are weirdos...we ARE Jesus freaks. We are aliens in the minds of those who are residents of this world. But we are not of this world anymore. We are citizens of heaven.

Philippians 3:20 - our dwelling is no longer of the earth.

Let me tell you...Many times I've have been ridiculed for my faith, and it makes us feel alone doesn't it? Even though we have friends at work and relationships with family, the hard fact is that to live as a believer in Jesus

Christ means that we are now an outcast who does NOT fit in and it's a lonely existence sometimes. And that makes us feel like we're second all the time. We're behind and abandoned by God alienated from everyone else who seems to be first. They have the most fun and are happier than we are, because they can enjoy life more.

Well if it's any consolation to say this... you're not alone... at feeling alone!

And you are not second in life.

Look around you. How many of you feel like you don't belong? That the world no longer has a place for you, lay your head? And if you don't feel these things then my question to you is why not? You should!

I'm here to tell you today that to be second in this world is a good thing because we are number one with God. And we can't be #1 with God and man at the same time.

If you feel alienated...then you are doing the right thing! We as Christians, we are actually called to be strangers in a strange landexisting in a world that we temporarily live in. We are called to be in the world, but not of the world (John 17) and not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). "I am a stranger on earth" said King David (Psalm 119:19). And to be these things we are meant to GO AGAINST THE GRAIN in life.

Now what does that mean? A people who “go against the grain”? (Show pic of sanding wood) It’s actually called cross grain sanding believe it or not.

1st Peter 2:11 - "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. (12) Live such good lives among the pagans. That, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."

This means we can literally change lives around us just by being what we really are. We are a Holy Nation, living in an Alien Nation, while enduring Alienation.

You see that’s why Abraham didn't want to be given this land for free. Because he didn't want to be indebted to the Hittite people. He knew if he accepted their offer of taking that land and cave for free...he would then be one of them. (Even though by right...God did give Abraham that land. It was promised to him). But Abraham chose to stay separated from them. And he did it with kindness. But was firm in his answer. He chose to remain an alien instead of selling out his identity in the Lord and the Lord alone.

And you know sometimes for us...that’s hard. We sell out our calling in life just to become one with those around us. We must remember that we as Christ followers are called to be set apart, go against the grain and be a light to this dark and fallen world no matter how out of place we feel, and how tempted we are and enticed to conform to the patterns of this world . WE ARE NOT OF THIS

WORLD! And doesn't that say it all? WE ARE INDEED ALIENS! Sojourner

Now this brings up our second word – sojourner

This is not a word we use too often, but it has been on my mind since I re-read this passage and it's fascinating to me.

The Webster's Dictionary definition of sojourner... as a **person who resides temporarily in a place.**

The Biblical definition is much deeper. It means a Pilgrim (a person who journeys to a sacred place for religious reason. And that's who Abraham was. He was on a pilgrimage. Called out by God to leave what was familiar, to leave what was his home of Haran, to accomplish the will of God.

Abraham and his family were what we call today Nomads.

Haran to Shechem then to Bethel then to Ai then to Negeb then to Egypt (*famine*)> back to Negeb)> Dan (Gen 14)> Salem (Gen 14:17-21)> Hebron> Gerar> Beersheba > Moriah (*Isaac offering*)

Which means he had been going on a pilgrimage for 62 years of his life. Again in Hebrews 11, (the bible's faith hall of fame) gives us a list of those patriarchs (like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob & Moses) who lived out their faith by following God's calling despite how uncomfortable it may have been. Hebrews 11:13 "In faith died all these,

not having received the promises, but from afar having seen them, and having been persuaded, and having saluted them, and having confessed that strangers and sojourners they are upon the earth.”

What does this mean to us? The point is....We all need to be willing to become sojourners in our faith. Because that's who God can use. Someone who is willing to step out and be willing to go to someplace unknown in life. Someplace where God can use us.

Not necessarily a strange and foreign land but maybe just a strange and foreign place in our lives. And that's not at all the mentality in our culture.

There was a time where the American dream (which was stated in the Declaration of Independence) was that we have a God given right to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And somewhere along the way the American dream became this...Show pix of American dream.

Instead of pursuing happiness we want happiness handed to us. We want to settle down in our homes with the white picket fence with all our needs met by our government and a big bank account building for retirement and spend the rest of our lives nesting.

Tell me...where is God in all of that? Where is His kingdom? Where is His will be done on earth as it is in heaven? We can't as believers “settle down.” This is why God sometimes has to kick our butts out of our comfort zones and put us in a place of unfamiliarity and uncomfortably so that we have to call on Him. That's the life of a sojourner...Like Abraham.

The reason God allowed so many of patriarchs like Abraham to live that life was because they had to depend on God each and every day. To search for water sources and the different pastures (oasis) that would have to be located was how they had to survive in such an arid region. They depended on God for their provisions each and every day and this made their faith not just a word...but something they lived. So God calls us out as well so we must depend on the Lord for our water sources as well.

Understand...This is how God made Abraham grow. You know...the whole story of Abraham was not about him reaching the Promised Land. ("I passed through the seven levels of the Candy Cane forest, through the sea of swirly-twirly gum drops, and then I walked through the Lincoln Tunnel to the Promised Land.")...but rather the whole story of Abraham was about how he grew in his faith and became the father of faith.

The sojourners are the ones who are always moving forward, always growing never being satisfied where they are in their walk with God.

So you know what they do because they are not satisfied in their walk? They walk further and eventually they may wind up in a place that may seem strange and foreign but that's alright. Because that's where God is!

Complacency - The opposite of a sojourner is someone who is complacent. Such an ugly word!

Webster's definition of complacency -

A feeling of being satisfied with how things are, and not wanting to try to make them better.

Instead of growing in our faith...we become weaker. That's why it's important to step out of our comfort zones and get involved in areas that God may be calling us.

Things like our small groups. To many it's uncomfortable.

To get involved in serving...well that's not my personality.

To pass on your ministry to the next generation even though you've held on to it so long that it now defines you.

That's why it's important to step out for things as big as a missions trips or as small as striking up a conversation about Jesus to a stranger.

We are called to step out! To move out! To go where the Lord calls us, and that's not where the enemy wants us.

Have you ever noticed that God had to command people to be fruitful and multiply and FILL THE EARTH?

Remember the tower of Babel how they decided to stay in one area and make a name for themselves. So God had to intervene and force them to move out?

Because man wants to live independent of God and so settle down instead of moving out.

We view success as beating the odds and achieving our goals. And if we do...then we can say we have done well in life.

Life isn't something that we conquer. It's a journey. It's ongoing.

And I want you to know that the word "sojourner" and the word "wanderer" are not the same. A "sojourner" is a temporary resident. A "wanderer" is a person who travels aimlessly.

That's why having a church home is so important instead of jumping from church to church wandering around aimlessly.

The church is the oasis for the sojourner. The place where we receive rest and are pointed to living water. The place where we glorify God for the provision he made – but then we go back out, out of the comfort zone, into a strange world as a stranger to bring that living water to others.

Hebrews 11 – **(8)** By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. **9** By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger/alien in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. **10** For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is

God. **11** And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she[b] considered him faithful who had made the promise. **12** And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. Abraham achieved far more than any man in history because he was willing to become a stranger and a sojourner for God. Is that you today? Are you willing to say (as Desires song said) I'm so glad I don't belong. I'm glad that I don't fit in. Because we are residents of heaven and this place will never be our true home. Let's be ok with that.