

Scripture Reading: Genesis 14:1-16

“1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, Jehovah has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. 3 Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. 4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. Jehovah judge between you and me." 6 So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence. 7 Now the Angel of Jehovah found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai." 9 The Angel of Jehovah said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand." 10 Then the Angel of Jehovah said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude." 11 And the Angel of Jehovah said to her: "Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because Jehovah has heard your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." 13 Then she called the name of Jehovah who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" 14 Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered. 15 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.”

"Abram Harkens Unto Sarai"

This morning we again have an entire chapter in the Book of Beginnings as our text, and Lord willing it is going to require just a single sermon this time! It is an important chapter & I hope to provide some general applications and some specific ones relating to our current situation here at Church of the King.

- Now before I dig into the text it is important to remember the context, as we always should, and here it is especially important.

Chapter sixteen is a rather disappointing chapter in many ways and yet it is surrounded by the GREAT covenantal chapters; fifteen and seventeen. We studied the amazing promises that God made and confirmed with incredible illustrations in chapter fifteen, and in the coming weeks we will see more promises to Abram and Sarai...

- With God giving them new names and the sign of circumcision in chapter seventeen.

And yet, here in chapter sixteen we see both Sarai and Abram succumbing to temptations and walking in the flesh rather than by faith. Pastor Robert Candlish rightly relates what we see here to the temptations faced by our Lord Jesus in the wilderness where Satan said things like, 'If you are the Son of God' or "as it is written" when asking Jesus to do things in the flesh like turning rocks into bread or jumping from the Temple. Jesus rightly refused to take short-cuts and always turned to the Word of God to confirm His right actions.

- Obviously Jesus is our proper example when it comes to resisting temptations and I hope we can learn this morning how Abram serves here as our warning.

These are important lessons to learn as we walk with the Lord in faith and this chapter cannot be ignored any more than chapter seven of Romans can be just skipped over, though we often want too! So God has promised Abram that he would be the father of many nations and we need to begin by seeing that it was the background of that promise which leads to the sin that we see Sarai falling into with a plan for Hagar.

Thus we read in verse one: “Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar.

- **She knew clearly what the Lord’s will was, but was not willing or able to wait upon the Lord to see it fulfilled in His time.**

She sets out to accomplish what God had said would happen working in the flesh, rather than trusting God: 2 “So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, Jehovah has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her."

She sees that God has not allowed her to have children so there must be another way to carry out his plan for her husband... Sarai is attempting to be Abram’s help-meet, but not in faith! And then at the end of verse two we see a very sad reminder of the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden...

“And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.”

- **This is also a sober warning for wives: They ARE their husband’s help-meet, or helper fit for them, for good or for ill!**
- **But as was the case in the Garden the ultimate responsibility here rests with Abram.**

Rather than seeking the Lord and asking for His guidance, or at least His permission, Abram decided on his own that perhaps Sarai had come up with a good plan! After all the promises said that Abram would have a seed with no specific mention of who the mother would be up until this point!

3 “Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.”

We see here with ten years having passed why Sarai could have become impatient with God’s timing and she even goes so far as to have Abram marry Hagar to keep up the appearance of righteousness! Also, note that Hagar is now twice identified as an Egyptian and a servant.

Now of course it is easy for us to see how wrong-headed this plan was, but we should consider how easy it was for Abram and Sarai to rationalize how this might just be what God could use to carry out His plan. God had blessed them as they left Egypt and most assume this is when Sarai was given Hagar as her servant. In those days a servant was yours to do with as you pleased, so Sarai felt no hesitation about using Hagar. They would have known that polygamy was wrong because God established marriage between ONE man and ONE woman from the beginning, but HEY all the surrounding cultures were doing it so how wrong could it be!

Truly this type of thinking is the source of SO much of the worldliness that we see in the Church today, with much of it done with “good” intentions.

- **As with all of God’s Laws & Commandments there are good reasons to follow them and serious consequences when we violate them and that is what we are going to see here in our morning account:**

4 “So [Abram] went in to Hagar, and she conceived.”

That is the translator’s polite way of saying that they had sexual relations and the plan appears to be working because Hagar becomes pregnant:

- **Abram has an heir!**

The problem is that this was NOT God's plan but one carried out in the power of the flesh; in their own strength. Thus we are going to see serious consequences!

- **Then in the next few chapters, how God carries out what He intended despite all the efforts of Abram and Sarai to mess up His perfect plan.**

“And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.”

Suddenly the world is turned upside down and the humble servant is now the one who is pregnant, carrying who they assumed would be Abram's heir. The servant was now ready to play the lead role and thus despised Sarai...

- **An attitude that did not sit well with the one who thought she had been SO clever with her plan to provide her husband a son...**

Thus we read in verse 5 “Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; & when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. Jehovah judge between you and me."

Once again we have a resounding similarity to man's fall in the garden only now the role is reversed with the woman saying it is the fault of the husband that God gave her!

- **In a sense Sarai is saying to Abram, why did YOU get us into this mess!**

Sarai is now reaping what she sowed and we need look no further than the wisdom of Proverbs to see how serious a situation it truly was:

In chapter 30 we read about four things the earth cannot endure and guess what makes the list?

Proverbs 30:21: “ For three things the earth is perturbed, Yes, for four it cannot bear up: 22 For a servant when he reigns, A fool when he is filled with food, 23 A hateful woman when she is married, And a maidservant who succeeds her mistress.”

I am not sure if Abram now understood such wisdom or was just being a bit of a wimp, but we then read in verse six:

“So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.”

Abram assures Sarai she can do whatever she thinks is right and that he will not interfere... Suggesting the sad advice of ‘Do what you think is best!’

- **Not very good headship!**

Sarai makes life miserable for Hagar and she flees back toward Egypt. At this point of our text we have seen man's effort to accomplish God's purposes and more efforts to set things right when they go wrong and thus at this point all is lost: Hagar has lost her home, Sarai her servant, & Abram has lost a wife and his son!

Finally we have the Lord appearing in verse seven, not to Abram or Sarai, but to the humble servant girl who has been used, neglected and abused...

7 “Now the Angel of Jehovah found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.”

- **Much could certainly be made of God's appearance at a well!**

Wives will be found for both Isaac and Jacob at wells! Here perhaps we should think of Jesus meeting the woman at the well in Samaria... A woman that a Jew would never have talked with!

And the Lord comes knowing much about Hagar just as Jesus did the Samaritan women:

8 “And He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai."

The Lord asks Hagar two simple questions that are good to ask and answer often in our lives:

- **“Where have you come from, and where are you going?”**

As is usually the case she can answer the first one easily but has no way to be sure about the second and thus gives no answer there.

- **We truly need the Lord’s wisdom and instruction to know where we should and will be going!**

Of course when we have set ourselves on a wrong course what the Lord is going to tell us is that we need to change directions and that is just what He tells Hagar:

“9 The Angel of Jehovah said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand."

As far as we are told, Hagar bears no responsibility for the unwise plans or actions of Abram and Sarai in this whole mess, but she still does have responsibilities to accept her station in life and thus God says to return and bear up under whatever poor treatment Sarai gave her.

Not easy counsel to hear or obey and I think the Lord knows this because He immediately gives Sarai comfort and some understanding of why it is important for her to return and be under the grand plan that God has in store for her AND her son...

10 “Then the Angel of Jehovah said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude." 11 And the Angel of Jehovah said to her: "Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because Jehovah has heard your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

We will consider more details about Ishmael and his descendants when he and Hagar are sent away after the birth of Isaac, but I think you can see how what is shared here would have been comforting to Hagar and thus she praises God and returns to serve Sarai.

13 “Then she called the name of Jehovah who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" 14 Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered.”

She refers to the Lord as the God who sees and calls this spring the, “Well of the Living One Who Cares for Me!”

- **Hagar obeys and returns, not knowing what is in store for her, but she goes knowing the God who cares for her!**

15 “So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.”

Without any further details given, we know that Hagar returns and that Abram follows the Angel’s instructions to name the child Ishmael. Hagar continues on as Sarai’s hand-maiden and mother of Ishmael until she is sent away after the birth of Isaac.

I think we are given the detail about Abram’s age at this point because it confirms that it will be almost fourteen years before God again appears to Abram...

- **Perhaps this was a sort of time-out for Abram to ponder how sadly things turned out when he tried to work God’s plans in his own strength!**

As we move on in the Book of Genesis we will see how God's plan unfolds with the birth of Isaac, but the results or consequences of the actions we see here in chapter sixteen will continue to trouble Abram and Sarai and the tensions between the children of Ismael and children of Isaac will continue on for centuries!

Just as a small pebble cast into a pond disturbs all of the surface, so these worldly actions by Sarai & Abram reach far beyond their own lives.

- That is one of the major lessons that we should know well, but must always keep in mind:
Our actions have consequences!

This is pretty obvious in the case of major sins like murder or adultery because the consequences are often very public with a death or divorce. But it applies in seemingly little things as well...

There is no "format C" command in the human brain that can erase a pornographic image that someone chooses to look at. There is no 'emotion eraser' that can remove the memory of unkind or cruel words that are spoken in a fit of anger. I could go on with dozens of examples, but we must not overlook the deeper lesson of this account...

The more subtle and usually more devastating problem is when we go off trying to do the Lord's work in our own strength!

- As Dr. Francis Schaeffer often reminded us, we must always strive to do the Lord's Work in the Lord's Way!

Now I did mention at the beginning that I would have some general applications and also one specific to Church of the King and I would now like to turn there...

Lord willing this is going to be the last sermon I will preach here at Eagle's Hall as we begin our services next week in a new facility. We have prayed over and planned this move and believe that it is God's will for our Congregation at this time. However, even with the Lord's leading and confidence that we are in His will, the lesson we must remember from our text is that it is all too easy to take up the task of carrying out His will in the power of the flesh rather than in the Spirit.

We will be tested in many ways in the coming weeks and months and how we react to and handle these tests will show which path we have chosen. There will be temptations to want to continue some traditions that have served us well here in the Eagle's Hall that may not be wise in our new home. There may also be temptation to give up some good things we have developed because we want new things.

- IF we walk in the Spirit we can avoid BOTH of those ditches.

We are going to have new opportunities for growth and we must take full advantage of them while not turning to the world's ways as Sarai did with getting a son for Abram. We must be patient if that is what God desires and yet we must also be prepared to have our "peace" disturbed if He stretches us with new challenges! While it has been a blessing, and at times very interesting, to use what was once mostly a dance studio for worship and watch it improve over the years...

- We will now enter what is much more like a sanctuary.

Again we will have on the one hand the opportunity to step-up our worship in a Godly way while having to guard against being stuffy or making those who might visit feel uncomfortable. Yes, this will come with some new rules that need not be burdensome or legalistic if we see the practical benefit of observing them!

It has been amazing to see how well we have functioned in this hall as a literal 'catch-all' of activity. We have music practice, while everyone is saying hello and hauling kids up the stairs and taking food to the kitchen [Roger and our pianists have been very patient!]

The new facility will avail us with the opportunity to have a better time of practice & improvements in our music, but that will require a new commitment to set aside time for those brief practices.

When the Eagle's took away the back door, it certainly caused some folks to think twice about getting up and down during the service, and with rear exits in the new sanctuary those temptations may return for some!

- **I will probably have to start reminding folks about how we really should be able to be prepared to sit for ninety minutes of worship!**

We will have the blessing of a separate room for the fellowship meal, but that will come with the added challenge of watching out for your own and everyone else's children to make sure they are safe and behaving properly!

We will have the opportunity to lift up even more beautiful worship music and can finally have those who are able kneel for our time of confession!

These are good things, and certainly things that are pleasing to Jesus, but they can also be done with great pride!

That is why we must take the major lesson from our morning text to heart:

- **We must NOT attempt to do the Lord's work in our own strength and wisdom!**

IF we do, just as we saw in this account, all in the end will be lost and God will have to come meet with us at a lonely well and tell us to turn around!

Rather, let us be those who strive to walk in the ways of the Lord, so that we can approach our new place of worship with all the confidence that the Apostle Paul wanted the Saints to have!

Hebrews 10: "19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

Communion Meditation: Psalm 67

"God be merciful to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us. Selah

2 That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.

3 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

4 Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, And govern the nations on earth. Selah

5 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

6 Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us.

7 God shall bless us, And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him."