

April 7, 2024
The Second Sunday of Easter
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God's Narrative: The Patriarchy

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father, from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. We've been dealing with God's narrative, the truth, God's word, and we've been focusing on Abraham. We've seen how God told Abraham to just go and head to the southwest, and Abraham went in faith. Just as we are also called to go and make disciples of all nations and go in faith, knowing that Jesus will always be with us.

Then we saw how Abraham interceded for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and how that was a little bit of a foretaste of what was coming with Jesus as He intercedes for all mankind and then as we intercede for each other in prayer and supplications.

Last week, we saw the very difficult call to go and sacrifice his only son, which God stopped him from doing. But we saw that Abraham had faith. He knew that the covenant was made, that the Messiah would come through Isaac, and that through Isaac all nations would be blessed. So, we read in Hebrews 11 that it was in faith Abraham went to do it, because he knew God would raise Isaac from the dead.

Today we take a look at Abraham the father. And we look at it from the standpoint of Genesis 24, where we read now Abraham was old, well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. And so, Abraham calls his oldest servant, the one who had charge of everything he had. So, this was the most trusted servant, as well as the eldest, probably the wisest servant. And Abraham gave him a job. A job so important that he had the servant take an oath before God. What was this oath? What was this promise? I quote, "that you not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell."

Now understand he's living in Canaan. The Canaanites were heathens. It would be both politically and socially to his advantage to have his son marry one of the women from the area because then he could develop alliances with the Canaanite families. But since they did not worship the true God, Abraham takes the long view, the eternal view. Literally, he takes such a long view, he

goes all the way to Second Corinthians 6:14 where Saint Paul tells us that we don't want to be unequally yoked, especially when it comes to marriage.

And so, Abraham tells his servant, I quote. "Go to my country and to my kindred and take a wife for my son Isaac." Of course, the servant has a couple of questions about this. Question #1-What if the woman doesn't want to come back? Question #2-What if the family wants Isaac to come and meet with them first? Abraham comes back with. Don't take him back because God has promised this land to me and to my offspring, to Isaac. He stays here. And what happens if the woman won't come with you? Then you're released from the oath. You don't have to fulfill it. And we read that the servant took ten camels, and I quote, "all sorts of choice gifts." This would be like the dowry, of payment to the family.

And so, the servant went, we read, to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. Now that wasn't actually the name of the city. That's the name of Abraham's brother. And Nahor lived in this particular city. And now we start to see Abrahams' influence, his teaching, a little insight into who he really who he really was because when the servant gets there we read, I quote, "he prays, Oh Lord God of my master Abraham, grant me success." And we read that he was standing by a spring of water as he did this, and the women of the town were coming out to get water. And so, he prays, "let the one who I ask for drink, give me drink, but also water my camels." And he says, "Then I will know she is, I quote, 'the one you have appointed for your servant, Isaac.'"

This is a pretty awesome servant. But it also tells you a lot about what Abraham taught him and what he was raised up in Abraham's family doing. And he makes this prayer and reminds us of that often-quoted passage from Isaiah 65. "Before they even call out, I will answer them." And so, we read again I quote, "Before he had finished speaking, here comes Rebecca, daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor." This is Abraham's nephews' daughter and we read she was, again I quote, "very attractive." Not only was she attractive, she truly was from the lineage of Abraham because like Abraham, she also was very hospitable.

And so, we read that the servant asks for her to give him a drink. She gives him a drink and showing true hospitality, she offers to water all the

camels. Camels take a lot of water, especially after a three-day journey. And we see that again God has worked a miracle. Because not only does she give him water, give the camels water; but when the servant asks her would there by chance be any room in your father's house for me to stay tonight? She comes back with, "we have plenty of food and room for you and your camels." I just want you to think about that, how open Rebecca was to serve. And she didn't ask any questions. This is the Holy Spirit at work among people who know God. It is a great example for us. And what's the servant do? Again, we see Abraham's influence. He bowed his head and worshipped the Lord, the God of his master, Abraham. And so, we have a little bit of a quick spiritual lesson here, shall we say, a math lesson in spirituality. Prayer + Answer to that Prayer = Worship.

Now, to make a long story short, Rebecca agrees to go with the man immediately. Not waiting, spending any more time on long goodbyes. None of that. She goes immediately. And it's the beginning of a biblical love story, because as she comes into that area of Palestine where Abraham lives, we read that Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening. He was going out to pray in the evening. Probably just like his dad did. He looks up and he sees the servant, the ten camels and there's. Well, there's someone with him. Meanwhile, Rebecca looks and sees him walking towards them as she says to the servant. Who is that man walking in the field to meet us? That's Isaac. And they meet, Isaac takes her back to the tent of Sarah, his mother, and she becomes his wife and we read Isaac loved her.

And then it continues. Isaac was 40, and like Sarah, his mother. Rebecca was barren. So Isaac, again the influence of his dad, Isaac prays just like his father had prayed about it. God hears, God answers, Rebecca becomes pregnant with twin boys. We read that these twin boys struggled within her and it was at such a level of discomfort that she asks, 'why is this happening to me?' But also true to that family, she asks the Lord, "What's going on, Lord?" And the Lord responds to her. "These are two nations in you and the older will end up serving the younger."

When we look at this account. We see two of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and let's throw Rebecca in there, too. But they were great men of faith, as was Rebecca. Great men of faith who married well, as did Rebecca. Abe

passed on his faith to his son as well as to his servants. Abraham did not compromise and do what was worldly wise and try to meet the expectations of the Canaanites around him. No, he took the long view, what my son needs is a wife who believes so that their children and grandchildren will believe and he trusted in God. And we see that as every time he trusts in God, and he meets the expectations of God, God repeats the covenant to him by saying it will continue through Isaac. And we read, “because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my law.” God was walking with him and blessing him in everything. And Abraham prayed, and Isaac saw all of this. And we read, Isaac followed in his father's footsteps in Genesis 26. Great men of faith who Jesus himself made a point of using as an illustration.

When we look at our gospel this morning, Jesus is dealing with the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection. They didn't have faith. They didn't believe God could do it. Abraham certainly did. He passed it on to Isaac, who passed it on to Jacob. God's point to them. God said I am the God of Abraham, I am the God of Isaac, I am the God of Jacob. It's in the present tense. He's the God of the living, not the dead. And that made me think about what's really most important in life, and it made me think about the gospel message.

And I get this little newspaper thing on a monthly basis. It's called Christian News. The headline of the latest one is I quote, “The gospel is about going to heaven when you die.” That really is the good news, isn't it? Yes, it's tremendously good news that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that Jesus went to the cross on our behalf and He died. But He rose and He lives so that we might live with Him forever in heaven.

And just like the patriarchs passed on the good news that the Messiah was going to come through this lineage, it is now our role to be like those patriarchs and pass on that that Messiah has come. And that He has opened the door to heaven for everyone who is willing to say, “It's not about me, I haven't earned heaven. It's about Jesus who paid the price of my sin, rose from the dead, that's ascended into heaven, preparing a place for me, for you, for all who put their faith, hope, and trust in Him.” Amen.