**The Wells of Genesis Series**

**“Abraham’s Servant: The Well of Providence”**

**Genesis 24 (esp. verses 10-27)**

**Introduction**

Currently we are looking at seven different events that took place around water wells or springs in the book of Genesis. I believe that the Lord can use these experiences to shape our lives for the glory of God. This morning’s text will come from Genesis chapter twenty-four when Abraham sends his servant to find his son, Isaac, a wife. The chapter is quite lengthy so I will tell you the beginning and ending of the story and read the middle portion that is recorded in verses ten through twenty-seven.

**The Beginning of the Story**

Isaac, the promised child of the covenant, was a grown and it was time for him to get married and start a family. Remember that Isaac was the legitimate descendant of Abraham, which would eventually bring forth the Christ. (Mt.1.1-17) Sarah, Abraham’s wife and Isaac’s mother, had passed away. At this time Abraham was about 140 years old and the Lord had blessed Abraham in every way. But Abraham was concerned that Isaac would have a proper wife to continue the covenantal legacy.

So Abraham called in his most faithful servant, the one who was charge of all that he owned, and made a three-fold oath to him. First, the servant would not choose a wife from the Canaanites. The Canaanites were the population surrounding Abraham and he was concern that a wife of the Canaanites would not be a believer. Second, the servant would travel to Abraham’s home country, over 400 miles, and choose a wife for Isaac. Third, Abraham made the servant swear that he would never take Isaac to Abraham’s home country. Isaac must stay in the Promise Land. The faithful servant asked Abraham what he should do if the woman is not willing to come with him and Abraham reassures his servant that if that would happen he would be freed from the oath. So, the servant made an oath to Abraham that he would do what his master commanded. (Gen.24.1-9)

Let me pick up on the reading of God’s Word starting with verse ten.

***10****Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master’s in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.****11****He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water.****12****He said, “O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham.****13****Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water;* ***14****now may it be that the girl to whom I say, ‘Please let down your jar so that I may drink,’ and who answers, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels also’—may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master.”*

***15****Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder.* ***16****The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, and no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up.****17****Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, “Please let me drink a little water from your jar.”****18****She said, “Drink, my lord”; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink.****19****Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking.”****20****So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels.*

***21****Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the Lord had made his journey successful or not.* ***22****When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold,****23****and said, “Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father’s house?”****24****She said to him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.”****25****Again she said to him, “We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in.”****26****Then the man bowed low and worshiped the Lord.****27****He said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the Lord has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.”*

**The Ending of the Story**

The story ends with Rebekah running back to her father’s house telling her family about everything that happened at the water well. After hearing the story Rebekah’s father and family welcomes Abraham’s servant and set before him a great banquet. The servant insisted that he have the opportunity to share the oath he had made with Abraham before they begin the feast. The servant continues to tell them about miraculous incident that occurred Rebekah at the well, and asked if Rebekah would journey back with him to become Isaac’s wife. After some thought her father agrees and Rebekah consents. They all enjoyed the great banquet and the next morning they send Rebekah and Abraham’s servant on the way back to meet Isaac. (Gen.24.28-67)

**Providence**

There are so many factors surrounding chapter twenty-four of Genesis that a preacher could preach ten different sermons on this one chapter. But this morning I want to focus on the servant’s trust in God’s providence. I’ve entitled this sermon “The Well of Providence” but some might not be familiar with the idea of providence. It’s not a word that is used a lot in our day.

Maybe the word “providence” is not used much in our culture because people don’t understand what providence is and how God’s providence shapes our lives. Many people today believe that events are merely acts of coincident or chance and God has nothing to do with daily events. While believers in God’s Word recognize that God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things and He is also intimately involved in the affairs of humanity.

Many Christians confuse God’s providence with God’s foreknowledge. Of course we believe that the eternal God knows all things past, present, and future. But the doctrine of providence is more intimate than foreknowledge. It’s not that God only knows what will come to pass but He is intimately involved in providing for me. As the hymn writer wrote, “His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me.” (Lk.12.6-7) And God is not just watching but He is intimately involved in providing for me. The doctrine of providence means that God cares about me. Providence means God will supply what I need. Providence means that whether in sickness or in health, for richer or poorer, or for better or worst my God is intimately involved in providing for me. One of the oldest sayings of the ancient church summarizes the essence of the relationship between God and His people: *Deus pro nobis*. It means “God for us.” That is what the doctrine of providence is all about. God is for His people!

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?**He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?* (Rom.8.31-32)

*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.* (Rom.8.28)

And in this story of Abraham’s servant we see his trust and confidence in the providence of God. He was a man who truly rested in God’s providence. Let’s now look into how the Lord worked in the servant’s life to enable him to trust in God’s providence.

*Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master’s in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water. He said, “O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham.* (Gen.24.10-12)

**Please grant me success today**

The servant wasn’t afraid to ask the Lord for success. Our Church Fathers taught us “prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will.” (WSC#98) People ask, “Is it ok for me to ask God for the quick sale of my house?” Of course! People ask, “Is it ok to ask God to help find a higher paying job?” Of course!

People ask, “Is it is ok to ask God for healing?” Of course! What do you think God wants His kids to be broke, poor, and sick? Of course not! As God’s Words tells us, *“cast all you anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”* (IPt.5.7) The Bible says, *“pray for one another so that you may be healed.”* (Js.5.16) The Scriptures say, *“Ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach.”* (Js.1.5)

To believe in God’s providence means that you believe that God answers prayer. To believe in God’s providence means that you believe that God cares for His kids. To believe in God’s providence means that you are not afraid to ask God for success.

As we heard in our call to worship from Psalm 145:

*The Lord is righteous in all His ways*

*And kind in all His deeds.*

*The Lord is near to all who call upon Him,*

*To all who call upon Him in truth.*

*He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;*

*He will also hear their cry and will save them.*

*The Lord keeps all who love Him...*

Also notice that Abraham’s servant was not afraid to pray specific prayers.

*Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; now may it be that the girl to whom I say, ‘Please let down your jar so that I may drink,’ and who answers, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels also’—may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master.”* (Gen.24.13-14)

**Prays Specific Prayers**

There were several women coming to draw water from the well. How would Abraham’s servant know which one was the right girl? Notice that his prayer request was not just that the girl would give him a drink of water but that she would offer to water his ten camels as well. Considering that a camel may drink up to twenty gallons, watering ten camels meant at least an hour of hard work. The servant didn’t pray for just any girl. He prayed for a caring, hard working girl that was willing the serve a stranger.

The reason he could pray this specific prayer is because he believed God could do it. To believe in God’s providence means that you are not afraid to pray specific prayers. As Jesus said, “*And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”* (Mt.21.22) I love verse fifteen, “*Before he had finished speaking, came out with her jar on her shoulder.”* The Lord knows what we need before we ask Him. (Mt.6.8) The Lord had already prepared Rebekah’s heart to be the humble servant to the stranger. The Lord had already prepared Rebekah’s heart to be Isaac’s wife. The Lord truly knows what we need before we ask Him. So, ask boldly and specifically.

**Glazed in Awe**

As Rebekah watered the camels’ verse twenty-one says that *the man glazed at her in silence.* The servant glazed in spiritual wonder that God had intervened in his life. The Lord had brought him to the right place at the right time and prepared Rebekah’s heart before he got there. And on top of this she was *very beautiful*. Rebekah is one of seven women that the Bible says were beautiful. God had done exceeding abundantly beyond all that he had asked or thought and as Rebekah watered the camels he sat in awe.

Do you know one of the characteristics of the early church? *“Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe.”* (Acts 2.43) When was the last time you felt the sense of awe in what the Lord has done? It seems like feeling the sense of awe was a regular occurrence in the early church. Maybe we have normalized our expectation of what the Lord can do. Maybe we don’t live with any real expectation that God is going to show up and work wonders in our lives. As many of you know I grew up in the Charismatic/Pentecostal church I have seen a lot of weird stuff in the name of old time religion. But there is one thing that I have always appreciated about my spiritual ancestors. They believed God was going to show up! Maybe they believed more in the providence of God than we do.

The servant’s sense of awe caused him to bow in worship to God.

*Then the man bowed low and worshiped the Lord. He said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the Lord has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.”* (Gen.24.26-27)

**Being on the way, the Lord led me**

I love the literal translation *“being on the way, the Lord led me.”* I think this teaches us so much about the Lord’s providence. “Being on the way” implies movement, direction, and purpose. “The Lord led me” implies the Lord’s hand upon a person’s life. People have said to me, “I don’t know what the Lord wants me to do in the ministry of the church.” And I ask, “Well, what are your doing?” And they reply, “Nothing.” “And I said well how will you ever know if you keep doing nothing?” My point is that the Lord wants us “to be on the way.” The Lord doesn’t want us to be sitting around waiting. He wants us to be on the way and as we are on the way He will lead us. Believing in God’s providence means that we believe that the Lord will lead us, mold us, directs us as we are on our way. For the Lord to direct our steps we must be walking. (Pr.16.9) The servant had been traveling for over a week not knowing actually where he was going. He had a general idea but he didn’t have an address or a GPS. I am sure that there were times of doubt along the journey where he would ask himself, “What are you doing?” “Where are your going?”

But he just kept traveling northward and then there was a day when the Lord led him to a well outside of the city of Nahor where the Lord provided. And now as he is bowed low in worship he is able to say, “I was on my way but the Lord led me.”

Thanks be to God.

**Closing Thought**

Brothers and sisters, I want to challenge us to believe in God’s Providence. To believe that God is for us, cares for us, and provides for us. He is not a spectator. He is intimately involved in providing for us. I want us to pray that God would grant us success. I want us to pray specific prayers. I want us to expect that God is going to show up in our lives. I want us to believe that God will work wonders in our lives and we will have a sense of awe.

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?**He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?* (Rom.8.31-32)

**Call to Prayer**

“*And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”* (Mt.21.22)

**Benediction**

*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,**to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.* (Eph.3.20-21)