**The Wells of Genesis Series**

**“Hagar: The Well of Affliction – God Hears and Sees”**

**Genesis 16**

**Introduction**

Last week we began a new series of sermons entitled, “The Wells of Genesis.” During this series we are looking at seven different events that took place around water wells or springs in the book of Genesis. Water wells were gathering places where important decisions and events often occurred. I believe that the Lord can use these experiences recorded on the pages of Genesis to shape our lives for the glory of God.

This morning’s text will come from Genesis chapter sixteen when Hagar fled from Sarai, Abraham’s wife.

Let’s read the narrative this recorded in Genesis chapter sixteen.

*Now Sarai, Abram’s wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar.****2****So Sarai said to Abram, “Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.****3****After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram’s wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.****4****He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight.****5****And Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the Lord judge between you and me.”****6****But Abram said to Sarai, “Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.” So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.*

***7****Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.****8****He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?” And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”****9****Then the angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.”****10****Moreover, the angel of the Lord said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.”****11****The angel of the Lord said to her further,*

*“Behold, you are with child,
And you will bear a son;
And you shall call his name Ishmael,
Because the Lord has given heed to your affliction.****12****“He will be a wild donkey of a man,
His hand will be against everyone,
And everyone’s hand will be against him;
And he will live to the east of all his brothers.”*

***13****Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “You are a God who sees”; for she said, “Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?”****14****Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.* ***15****So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.****16****Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.*

**Hagar**

Two billion people on the face of the earth today revere Hagar as the “mother of the Muslim faith.” Perhaps no other woman besides Mary herself has as many people who honor her. But Islamic terrorism and jihad can make it difficult for Western Christians to see the redemptive significance in this passage. The fact that Islam, perhaps the greatest religious enemy of the church in our day, holds Hagar and Ishmael in high esteem makes it easy for many Christians to skim over this passage of Scripture. But to do so, I believe is a big mistake.

*Now Sarai, Abram’s wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar.****2****So Sarai said to Abram, “Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her.”*

**Context**

Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left Haran, his home country, and journeyed to Canaan embracing God’s covenant promise to make from his descendants a great nation so that all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gen.12.1-4) Inherent in God’s covenant to Abraham was the promised seed and the Lord reiterated that promise over and over again to Abraham. (Gen.12.7; 13.14-6; 15.4-5) Again, it is important for the student of Scripture to understand that God’s promise to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham’s descendant is ultimately fulfilled in Christ. (Mt.1.1-17; 28.18-20) The promised seed must be the legitimate descendant of Abraham, which would eventually bring forth the Christ.

So, when we come to Genesis chapter sixteen Abraham had lived in Canaan for ten years with one glaring omission – no child. Ten years is a long time to wait on the promises of God. Abraham and Sarah were now eighty-six years old. Often when the Lord delays we either quit believing or begin to develop our own plan. Well, ten years have passed and Abraham and Sarah are beginning to develop their own plan to obtain God’s promise. We see that just months before this episode in chapter sixteen Abraham asked the Lord to make his adopted servant child, Eliezar, his heir of the covenant. But the Lord would have nothing to do with it. The word of the Lord came to Abraham saying, *“This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.”*(Gen.15.4) So, Sarah’s proposal in Genesis sixteen was an innovative approach to address both her barrenness and God’s insistence that the child must come from Abraham’s own body.

**Compromise**

The problem is that the Sarah and Abraham’s plan was in direct disobedience to God’s Word. Even though the practice of a barren woman giving her husband permission to have children from their maid was acceptable in the broader culture in that region of the world (The Code of Hammurabi), it was not an acceptable practice from the pages of Scripture. What could go wrong? (I’m being sarcastic) Worldly mindset. Manipulation. Adultery. An illegitimate child. Bitterness. Hatred. Spiritual complacency.

The whole beginning of the episode is riddled with disturbing insights into Abraham and Sarah’s heart and mind. Remember the Bible tells us that, *“The heart is deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”* (Jer.17.9) And we see the evidence of deceitful hearts in Abraham and Sarah’s thoughts and actions. Let’s look a few: First, Sarah says to Abraham “*the Lord has prevented me from bearing children.”* Isn’t it ironic that she confesses that God has the power to prevent her from having children but denies God’s power to open the womb to bear children. Secondly, Sarah’s voice was louder in Abram’s ears than God’s voice. The world is full of “worldly and empty chatter” that can drown out the voice of God in our lives. (2Tim.2.16) Thirdly, verse three says that Abram’s wife, Sarai, gave her maid to be her husband Abram’s wife. Wow! You talk about weird double talk. The fact is that we all need to watch over our hearts and minds to make sure we are not trying to impose our will to become God’s will. Let’s look to ourselves, lest we too be tempted to fall into these pitfalls. (Gal.6.1)

**Hagar Flees**

We aren’t told all the details but we know Sarah’s treatment of Hagar was so harsh and Abraham’s lack of leadership was so obvious that it forced pregnant Hagar to flee to the desert. (Gen.16.4-6)

***7****Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.*

Hagar flees over a hundred miles to the parched backyard of Egypt, the region of the desert of Shur. The landscape of unending rolls of yellow sand and gravel was no place for a pregnant woman, alone and forsaken. There was no one to look after her, no one to hear her cries, and no one to care for her. Providentially, Hagar found her way to a spring of water in the midst of the dessert and that is where the angel of the Lord finds her.

Several times within Scripture we see woman encountering their beloved at a well. Rebekah is proposed to by a well. Rachel meets Jacob at a well. Zipporah meets Moses at a well. Could it be that here, Hagar too, has met her true protector, her true husband at a well in the wilderness.

The angel of the Lord is what theologians call a theophany or Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. And what was the first thing the angel of the Lord says to her? Her name, *“Hagar.”* The Lord calls her by name. Commentaries point out that this is only instance where the Lord addresses a woman by name. This pregnant Egyptian maid is getting the same kind of one-to-one attention from God as the big boys! Hagar is stunned because the gods she grew up with, the gods of the Egyptians, would have never notice a pregnant slave girl, let alone know her name. What stunned Hagar was not the Lord’s promise to give her a son, or how his descendants would the great multitude, or the prophecy of conflict that would proceed from him. What stunned Hagar was that God is the One who hears and sees!

**The God Who Sees and Hears**

Hagar’s astonishment that God is the One who sees and hears is seen in her response when she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “Thou art a God who sees.” (16.13) She also renames the well “The well of the living God who sees.” (16.14) What stunned Hagar was that the Lord saw every insult inflicted by Sarah. The Lord saw Abraham’s silent indifference. The Lord saw every lonely step she took on her way to Shur. The Lord saw every tear that streamed down her cheek and the Lord heard every cry that came from her lips. What stunned Hagar was that this God sought after her and found her by the spring of water in the midst of the dessert to pour upon her the refreshment of His grace. And that is the redemptive significance of the text. Our God comes down. Our God seeks after. Our God sees our affliction. Our God hears our cry. Our God finds us. Our God comes to us in the midst of the dessert. Our God knows our name. Our God cares. Our God pours out the refreshment of His grace upon our lives.

The Lord tells Hagar to return. But how can she? She’s in the Egypt’s backyard. How could see turn around now? What? Is she supposed to return to the insults and lack of leadership? No! Hagar was to return as a changed woman. As Hagar turned around she knew that she was not Sarah’s slave girl any longer. She no longer needed to humiliate herself as a woman by submitting to cultural norms. She knew that she was not Abraham’s mistress anymore. She was a woman who has been noticed by God, heard by God, found by God, protected by God, and given refreshment by God. She knew that she had seen God and remained alive. Just as we are told in the New Testaments to kept our eye fixed on Jesus the author and perfecter of faith so Hagar knew that as she kept her eyes on the “God who sees” that everything changes. (Heb.12.2a) The Lord told Hagar to name her son, Ishmael, which means “God hears.” So in the days to come every time Hagar gazed upon her son she would be reminded that the Lord sees her. She knew that every time she called out the Ishmael’s name she would be reminded that the Lord hears her.

Hagar’s return was not contingent upon Sarah or Abraham’s reception but rather it was based on the fact that God sees and hears! Don’t base your return on others. Based your return on God’s promises.

**Closing Thought**

Brothers and sisters, the Lord hears the cries of the afflicted. (Job 34.28) Just like here with Hagar our Lord Jesus comes to set free those who are downtrodden. (Lk.4.18) Be spiritual refreshed today knowing that our God sees and hears!

As we prepared to receive the Lord’s Supper hear the words of the Psalmist:

*Hear my cry, O God;
Give heed to my prayer.*

*From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*

*For You have been a refuge for me,
A tower of strength against the enemy.*

*Let me dwell in Your tent forever;
Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Selah.* (Ps.61.1-4)

**Transition to the Table**

As we prepare to receive the Lord’s Supper I can’t help think of another outcast woman, who had no real husband, who also met with the Lord Jesus at a well. (Jn.4)

Jesus said to her, *“Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”* (4.13-14)

Are you tried of drinking from the same well that doesn’t satisfy? Come to Christ today. He sees your affliction and hears your cry. He desires to give you the refreshment of His grace so that you will never thirst again.