

The Everlasting God

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Date: 17 August 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm one of the pastors here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. And it's my joy to bring God's word to you today. Special welcome if you're new or visiting with us.

We're glad that you're here and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good.

They don't need God's grace and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us. In his word. This week, we are continuing our series in the book of Genesis.

You'll remember that Genesis tells the origin story both of the world and of God's people, Israel. And when it tells the story of Israel, it begins with the story of Abraham, which is our focus.

Genesis is 50 chapters. We're actually just doing chapters 11 through 25 to focus on Abraham and his life. And we're doing that for two reasons. First, to prepare us to go back to Romans, our series that we're slowly working for.

[1 : 0 9] And when we head back, we'll be in Romans chapter 4, which is about Abraham. So we're looking at Abraham in Genesis to prepare us to look at Abraham in Romans. The second reason is that Abraham's story allows us to ask the question, what does it look like to follow God in faith?

Last week, we were in chapter 20. We saw this sort of counterintuitive contrast between good pagans and bad Christians. Abraham doesn't fear God in that episode.

Abimelech, a pagan king, does. This week, chapter 21, we're going to have three different scenes. And those three scenes have one thread that go through all of them, which is God's great blessing and provision.

And in case you're getting worried with three scenes, we're going to spend a lot of time on the first scene, some time on the second scene, a very small amount of time on the third scene.

With that, I invite you to turn with me to God's Word, Genesis chapter 21. You can turn in your Bible. You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your worship guide.

[2 : 2 1] No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word. And God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

So that's why we read now Genesis chapter 21, starting at verse 1. The Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as He had promised.

And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac.

And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

And Sarah said, God has made laughter for me. Everyone who hears will laugh over me. And she said, Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children?

[3 : 27] Yet I have born him a son in his old age. Verse 8. And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had born to Abraham, laughing. So she said to Abraham, Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.

And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman.

Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of a slave woman also, because he is your offspring.

So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder along with the child and sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

[4 : 41] Verse 15. When the water and the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bow shot.

For she said, Let me not look on the death of the child. And as she sat opposite with him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy.

And the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.

Up, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation. Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water.

And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. And God was with the boy and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow.

[5 : 39] He lived in the wilderness of Paran and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. Verse 22. Verse 22.

When Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized, Abimelech said, I do not know who has done this thing. You did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today.

So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant. Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart. And Abimelech said to Abraham, What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?

He said, These seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand, that this may be a witness for me that I dug this well. Therefore that place was called Beersheba, because there both of them swore an oath.

So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, rose up and returned to the land of the Philistines. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

[7 : 23] And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you for gathering us here together as your people.

We thank you even more that your word comes and brings dead things to life. It comes where there's nothing and it creates new creation.

Father, we thank you that that's true, that your word created new things at the beginning of the world, creates new life in us as well. And we ask that you would do that this morning, that you would pour out your Holy Spirit, that you'd be at work in our hearts here and now in a special way, melting and softening them, making them tender to you and your word and your ways.

That most of all, they would be drawn more and more to Jesus, that we would see him as more beautiful and more glorious. We ask all of these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. We have a lot of visitors here this morning. So thankfully, I'm going to tell you that if you have been with us for a while, you are aware of the overarching plot of the story of Abraham.

[8 : 42] And if you've not been with us, I'll review that for you quickly. We've taken some side quests, especially a side quest with the story of Lot. But there has been this one overarching question, this major plot that's gone from chapter 11 goes to the end of chapter 25.

And we are kind of getting there with chapter 21. The question, the tension starting with chapter 12 is this. Will God keep his promises to Abraham?

Will God keep his promises to Abraham? And if he does, how will he do it? Will Abraham and Sarah actually have a child?

Especially Sarah. Because remember, all the way back in chapter 11, the first thing we find out about Sarah is that she is unable to have children.

But there's a promise, right? Genesis chapter 12, very beginning, God tells Abraham, Genesis chapter 15, the promise is repeated again.

[9 : 54] Your son is going to be the heir. Your descendants will be as many as the stars. Then we proceed, chapter 17, God tells him again, not just chapter 12, you'll be the father of a great nation.

No, now in 17, we find out you're gonna be the father of many nations. I will make you into nations and kings shall come from you. Chapter 17, he reiterates, the kings are gonna come not from Hagar.

It's not gonna be through Ishmael. No, it's going to come from Sarah. And then in 17 and 18, we just keep plowing in this one direction and the promise is advanced.

In both chapters, God says to Abraham, Sarah will have a child next year. So we're moving chapter 11.

Sarah is not able to have children. Chapter 17 and 18, it's coming. It's gonna be in the year. Meanwhile, the years are ticking by. So every so often, you may have caught this, we are told Abraham's age.

[11 : 01] At the very beginning, chapter 12, Abraham is 75 years old. Next, chapter 16, we're told Abraham is 86 years old.

Chapter 17, Abraham is 99 years old. And then we get here, this what we just read, look with me, verse five, Abraham was 100 years old.

In the last couple months, we have covered 25 years of Abraham's life.

Which means that Abraham and Sarah have been waiting for 25 years for God to do what he said he would do.

Takes us to our first scene here. After 25 years of waiting, finally, finally, the promised son is here.

[12 : 06] We have the birth of Isaac. And the fact that God has fulfilled his promise is emphasized multiple times. Look with me at verse one, where it's repeated twice. The Lord visited Sarah as he had said.

Same verse, the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. Next verse, verse two, at the time of which God had spoken to him.

This is a reference back to chapter 17 and 18, which said, in one year, Sarah will give birth. The point is this.

After 25 years, God did what he said he would do. And not only did God do what he said he would do, God did it when he said he would do it.

God has done what he said he would do. And he did it when he said he would do it. God has honored his promise. And so Sarah's laugh of cynicism turns into a laugh of joy.

[13 : 24] Look with me at verse six. And Sarah said, God has made laughter for me. Everyone who hears will laugh over me.

We have been set up for that verse for several chapters now. Remember Genesis chapter 17, God comes to Abraham, reaffirms that Abraham's gonna be the father of many nations.

And Abraham says, hey, can't Ishmael just take it? Do we really have to do this thing where Sarah gives birth in her old age? Remember God says, yeah, it's gonna be Sarah's son and you're gonna call his name Isaac.

What does Isaac mean? Isaac means laugh. So 17, Sarah's gonna have a son. His name means laugh, laughter.

Genesis 18, remember Sarah overhears the conversation between Abraham and God. And what does she do when she hears that she is going to have a son in her old age? She laughs.

[14 : 32] But it's a laugh of bitterness, of cynicism, of disappointment. Right? Now, a laugh of hope, joy, and relief.

25 years in the making. God has fulfilled his promise. He's honored his word. Sarah's cynicism is turned to joy.

If you're familiar with the Bible, you know right about the middle of the Bible there's the book of Psalms. And the book of Psalms is the Old Testament prayer book or song book of God's people.

And depending on how you do the count, some people say a third of the Psalms, that's the conservative count, some people say a half of the Psalms are songs of lament.

So they're songs of God's people crying out to him in sorrow saying, God, how long? Why does the world have to be broken in this way? How long till you bring justice and punish our enemies?

[15 : 44] How long till you heal and restore the things that have been broken? But then, the last five Psalms have zero laments.

The last five Psalms all start and end with these cries of hallelujah. They are Psalms of incredible joy and praise. And there's a man who's a great scholar in the Psalms, this is on page seven of your worship guide, who comments on this explaining why the Psalms, which are filled with lament, end in praise.

The Psalms are a miniature of our story as a whole, which will end in unbroken blessing and delight.

This is what's happened with Abraham and Sarah. 25 years of doubt and frustration and cynicism and wondering, God's made a promise, we don't see any progress.

Where does it end? It ends closer to this, unbroken blessing and delight. Of course, there's still challenges, right?

[17 : 05] We'll see some of those in the next chapters. The story is not totally over for them. They will not have unbroken blessing and delight now in this life. ultimately in the life to come.

But why is that? Why is it that we have confidence that the story ends that way? It's very simple.

It's a simple point about God's character. The character of God is such that he always keeps his promises. Why does it end in unbroken blessing and delight?

Because God is a promise keeping God. God ultimately and finally keeps his promises to Abraham and Sarah.

Christian, God ultimately and finally keeps his promises to you. but he keeps those promises on his own timetable, right?

[18 : 21] Verse 2, at the time of which God had spoken to him, God decided it was going to take 25 years. And so it's tempting, right, to stray and come up with our own plan.

That's what we saw Abraham and Sarah do in chapter 16. They've had years of doubt, second guessing God's plan A with their own plan B. And I want you to imagine with me for a second, what could have been different?

What would have been different if Sarah had hoped and trusted in God's word from the beginning? We wouldn't have had to have chapter 16, right?

She wouldn't have had to go to Abraham and say, you know what, let's have a child through my servant Hagar. She could have skipped all the bitterness, all the pain that that brought her.

Imagine if Abraham had had this unshakable trust in God's word. There would have been no lying to Pharaoh, chapter 12.

[19 : 30] There would have been no lying to Abimelech, last week, right? There's so much pain and heartbreak that could have been avoided. Brothers and sisters, we also find ourselves in a long obedience.

We also find ourselves hoping in God's word, tempted to doubt that his promises will come true. Maybe you've been praying for 10 years, for a friend or a family member to come to know the Lord, and you're tempted just to turn away.

Maybe you've been in a season of depression or chronic pain, and you're not sure how much longer you can hold on. Maybe you've been married for 20 years, and even though it's been 20 years, the same arguments come up again and again, and you're ready to give up.

Maybe your parenting has gotten hard and discouraging and you're tempted to believe the lie that it is too late, so it's time to check out.

Christian, hope and hold on. God will keep his promises to you.

[21 : 12] You may not do it on your timetable. He will do it. His promise to you, by the way, is not that you will have a child in old age.

That was his promise to Sarah. His promise to you is not that he will make you wealthy in this life, but God has made promises to you.

In Psalm 34, he's promised you that he is close to the broken hearted and that he saves the crushed in spirit. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, he's made a promise to you.

God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you will be able to endure it.

God's made you a promise in Psalm 125. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.

[22 : 17] God's made you a promise in James chapter 4. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God.

He will draw near to you. He's made you a promise in Psalm 37. I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging bread.

He's made you a promise in Hebrews chapter 13. I will never leave you nor forsake you. He's made you a promise in Psalm 23.

Goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life. And you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Christian, God will do what he has promised. He may not do it on your timeline and he may not meet your deadline.

[23 : 35] He will do it. Hope and hold on. God makes and keeps Of course, we don't want to be so heavenly minded that we're of no earthly good, as the saying goes.

We have to be engaged in the work that God has for us here and now, but the way that we make it is that we never forget where we're going.

God makes and keeps his promises. He makes and keeps them in this life and in the life to come.

Of course, it's our Lord Jesus who tells us the same thing. God already read this for us this morning. This is page three from Matthew chapter six. For the Gentiles seek after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

[24 : 49] Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Okay, we have two more scenes, and I'm just going to very briefly those two scenes point out again God's faithfulness to his promises.

That's the theme of this chapter. First, we have the scene with Ishmael. You may have been tracking that in 2023, Prince Harry came out with his book called Spare, which included his grievances against the royal family, and the reason he called it Spare, it was in contrast to the word heir.

So he's in contrast to Prince William, who's the firstborn, that's the heir, the second born is the spare, the idea is, well, if something happens to the firstborn, we've got to back up. Right?

That is what is going on with Ishmael and Isaac, except it's reversed. Ishmael is the spare, even though he's firstborn. The reason he's the spare, even though he's the firstborn, is he's born through Hagar, not Sarah.

But as the spare, he's still a little bit of a threat. Not only is he a little bit of a threat, but he is threatened, right? Isaac means he's not going to be the one.

[26 : 13] Verse 12, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. Verse 8, there's this big party thrown for Isaac. He's weaned. This is a big deal in the ancient Near Eastern world because infancy has high infant mortality.

And so if you make it to this point, your odds of making it farther are really good. The celebration is this, the air is going to be the air. What's not stated is the spare is going to be the spare.

And so verse 9, Ishmael, now a teenager, begins laughing, continuing the wordplay, laughing here does not mean laughing with joy. This is not Sarah's laugh.

This is a mocking laugh. He's making fun of Isaac. The apostle Paul clarifies this for us writing in the New Testament in Galatians 4.

He says, Ishmael persecuted Isaac. So there's some bullying going on here. This party ratifies what was always true.

[27 : 21] Ishmael ain't it. Isaac is the real deal. And so verse 10, he's sent away. Verse 11, this tears Abraham's heart apart because at the end of the day it's still his son.

Verse 12, God says, do it. Do it because Isaac is the one through whom the blessed line will come. And God keeps his promise.

Remember Genesis chapter 17, Abraham had said, can't it just be Ishmael? That's going to make life so easy. And in 17, God says, look, I'm going to make Ishmael into a great nation.

Ishmael's not forgotten. Same thing here. Verse 13 of this chapter, I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also because he is your offspring.

So Ishmael is sent away. God provides, he provides water, saves Ishmael's life. Yes, the line will not continue through Israel and God will keep his promise.

[28 : 29] Verse 20, God was with the boy and he grew up. God will do what he said he will do.

Keeps promise about Ishmael, he also keeps his promise with Abimelech. Remember, Abimelech is just here in the last chapter, he's this pagan king and he comes to make a treaty.

Why? Why does Abimelech want to make a treaty with Abraham? Verse 22, he tells us why. God is with you in all that you do.

Why is God with Abraham in all that he does? Because God made a promise in Genesis chapter 12. Remember Genesis chapter 12, he said, I will bless you and make your name great.

What is Abimelech see? Abimelech sees that God has blessed Abraham and made his name great. Also in Genesis chapter 12, God says this, I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse.

[29 : 43] What's Abimelech doing? He wants to get the blessing that comes from blessing Abraham. God will do what he said he would do.

The first scene, he's kept his promise about the son. The last scene, he's showing he's kept his promise about the blessing.

It's all coming together. What God promised in 12 and 15 and 17 and 18 and 19, here in 21, he does.

How do we end? Verse 33, Abraham worships God. Why does Abraham worship God? Because he's the everlasting God, the one who keeps his promises.

Of course, the reason that Isaac matters is Isaac is part of Abraham's line. And the reason that Abraham's line matters is that Abraham's line leads ultimately to Jesus.

[30 : 51] That is the greatest fulfillment of God's promise in Genesis chapter 12 that he will be a blessing to the nations. How is he going to bless the nations? He's going to bless the nations fully and finally, not through Isaac, not through Jacob, not through Joseph.

He's going to bless them through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The one who comes as a human, lives the life we should have lived, dies the death we deserve to die.

So God's greatest promise is kept in the greatest way. He takes our sin and gives us his righteousness.

Why are all the other promises true? They're true because of Jesus' death and resurrection. Apostle Paul tells us this.

2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 20 he says, all the promises of God are yes and amen in Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him, how I've proved him, or and or, Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus, oh for grace to trust him more.

[32 : 14] Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you that you keep every promise you make. And you've kept the most important promise in your son and our savior, our Lord Jesus.

We ask that you would use that to grow in us an unshakable trust and confidence in you that leads to hope and peace and joy and boldness and courage and confidence and humility.

We ask these things in Jesus' mighty name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.