

# The God Who Sees

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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.

A 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've 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 morning, we're continuing our series in Genesis. You'll remember that Genesis tells two stories. It tells the story of the origin of the world. That's in Genesis chapters 1 through 11. And then in chapters 11 through 50 to the end, it tells us the origin story of God's people of Israel, beginning with Abraham.

We are focused in on chapters 11 through 25 because we're looking at Abraham's story and we're doing that for two reasons. First, it's preparing us to go back into our series in the book of Romans, where we will pick up in Romans chapter 4, which is about Abraham.

[ 1 : 1 4 ] And second, it allows us to answer this question. What does it look like to follow God in faith? I told you last week when we were in Genesis chapter 15 that we were in one of the most important passages in Scripture.

This week, Genesis 16, we're in one of the most painful and tender passages of Scripture. Painful because of the way that humans act. Tender because of the way that God acts.

As we come to this story in chapter 16, we all know the appeal, the temptation of a quick fix. We know what it's like to wish that things would happen faster.

We grow tired of waiting for our lives and for circumstances to change. And so we know the temptation that in the heat of life, we're tempted to choose our way instead of God's way.

We're tempted to go the fast way instead of waiting for God to act. This passage we're going to see, Abraham and Sarah face the very same temptation, that very same struggle.

[ 2 : 2 6 ] They have been waiting, unable to have children. Remember, we found that out at the end of chapter 11 at the very beginning. What's the first thing we found out about Sarah?

She is unable to have kids. And then chapter 12, there's this great promise. God comes to Abraham and says, look, you're going to be the father of this great nation.

The promise is then repeated at the end of chapter 13. Last week, chapter 15, remember, Abraham asks God, hey, by the way, what about my heir? You made this great promise.

I still don't have a son. And God says, don't worry. Your descendants will be as many as the stars. And so there's this anxiety, this ache, this impatience as Abraham is caught between the gap, the gap between God's promises for the future and his current reality.

And so as we come to this passage, Genesis 16 this morning, we're asking this question. What happens when we do things our way instead of God's way?

[ 3 : 36 ] What happens when we do things our way instead of God's way? With that, I invite you to turn with me to Genesis chapter 16. If you're new to the Bible, this is the very first book, so it'll be easy for you to find.

You can turn in your Bible. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn on your phone. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word.

And Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5 tells us, every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. And so that's why we read now Genesis chapter 16.

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had born him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar.

And Sarai said to Abram, Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go into my servant. It may be that I shall obtain children by her.

[ 4 : 42 ] And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So after Abram had lived 10 years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram, her husband, as a wife.

And he went into Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, May the wrong done to me be on you.

I gave my servant to your embrace. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me.

But Abram said to Sarai, Behold, your servant is in your power. Do to her as you please. Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.

Verse 7. The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to shore. And he said, Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?

[ 5 : 55 ] She said, I am fleeing from my mistress, Sarai. The angel of the Lord said to her, Return to your mistress and submit to her. The angel of the Lord also said to her, I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.

And the angel of the Lord said to her, Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael because the Lord has listened to your affliction.

He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him. And he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.

So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You are a God of seeing. For she said, Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.

Therefore the well was called Bir Lahai Roy. It lies between Kadesh and Bered. And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

[ 7 : 09 ] Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abraham. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you this morning that you are a God of seeing. That you see us in the midst of our struggles and trials and sin, and that you haven't given up on us, but instead you've given us your word, and even more than that, you've given us your son.

And so we ask that you would help us again this morning, that you would open up your word to us, that we would see it clearly, that we would grow in our knowledge and love for you, our obedience to you, that we would see Jesus Christ as more and more beautiful.

And we ask all of these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. We live in a world of quick fixes.

We know that not just from others, but from ourselves. But the tragic reality is often our quick fixes make the problem much, much worse.

[ 8 : 26 ] You may be lonely and decide that to solve that, you're going to go onto social media for a little bit, but researchers tell us that actually makes us more lonely.

We live in a culture of radical diets, and so you may think, I'm going to lose weight really fast, I'm going to go on a crash diet by eating almost nothing. Well, what happens?

You do lose weight fast, and then your body goes into starvation mode, and your metabolism plummets, and suddenly your problem is much worse than before.

Kids, you know this as well. You get poison ivy, right? And it itches so bad. And so you think, well, I'll solve this problem. I'll scratch it. What does that do?

Makes it much, much worse. My journey as a homeowner could be described in this way, hiring professionals to come in and redo and replace what previous homeowners thought they could accomplish.

[ 9 : 33 ] A quick fix is what Sarah does in this passage. We find out in verse three that she has been waiting for a long time. She has, in fact, been waiting for 10 full years, and she has decided it is time to wait no more.

God has promised her, promised Abram that great nations will come from him, and yet not only do they not have great nations, they don't have a single child. She blames God in verses two and three, and this is true in a sense.

It is true that God has prevented her from having kids. What she doesn't say is the other half of the story that God has promised.

Right? She knows that she doesn't have a child. What she forgets is that she can hold on to his promise that he is going to come and answer.

And so in the midst of that tension, in the midst of her ache and anxiety and impatience, Sarah takes things into her own hands, fails to trust God. This plan that she concocts, and the words that are used actually echo Genesis chapter three.

[ 10 : 48 ] If you're familiar with the book of Genesis, you know that chapter three is when Adam and Eve rebel against God by eating the forbidden fruit. Here, verse three, we're told she takes Hagar and gives Hagar to her husband.

Genesis chapter three, Eve takes the forbidden fruit, gives it to her husband. Here, verse two, Abram listened to the voice of Sarah.

Genesis chapter three, God comes to confront Adam and Eve, and what does he say to Adam? You listen to the voice of your wife. And so the narrator is telling us, look, when Abraham and Sarah do this, they are reenacting Genesis three all over again.

They are failing to trust God's word all over again. And so the results are predictable here. We ignore God's ways.

It does not fix our problems. It makes them much, much worse. It makes them worse in two ways. First, we hurt ourselves.

[ 12 : 03 ] Notice what happens in verses five and six. Sarah gets exactly what she wants. What she's asked for comes true. And what's her response? She is filled with rage.

She's livid with Abraham for going along with her plan. Her shame and her frustration are actually worse than they were before. She now has this daily reminder that Hagar is able.

She is unable, right? She has this raw anger in verses five through six, which reminds us, it's when our plans are thwarted that we really get to know ourselves.

It's our emotions that tell the truth. When we're angry or sad, we get to find out what's really important to us. Not only is she filled with rage, the narrator here makes it clear to us her plan did not work.

It worked in one sense. It works in the sense that Hagar does, in fact, become pregnant. It fails in another. Look with me at verse two. The plan here is, I shall obtain children by her.

[ 13 : 24 ] The goal is that Sarai has a kid. Now go to the end of the chapter. Verse 15, Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore.

Verse 16, Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore. In other words, this is not Sarai's child.

The plan in an ultimate sense has not worked. Hagar's gonna bear a child for me? No.

Hagar is going to bear a child for Hagar. It's not just Sarai who hurts himself. Abram also hurts himself. What does Abram want?

He wants what any husband wants, peace. Fortunately, he wants peace at any cost, right? And so instead of getting peace, he gets the opposite.

[ 14 : 25 ] He gets his wife cursing and yelling at him. As we look at verses five through six, we can say on the one hand, Sarai's anger is irrational, right? On the other hand, it's justified.

It's irrational in the sense that she actually asked for this. It's irrational that Abram did exactly what she said. It's justified in another sense.

Abram should have known better. What is God saying when he says, hey, Abram, you listened to your wife? He's saying, you should have been leading your family.

She's saying this to him, why did you let me do that? You should have known that I wasn't thinking straight, right? You knew I was overcome with my own pain and shame.

Shame. Why didn't you stop it? You chose the easy way rather than the right way. Unfortunately, we don't just hurt ourselves.

[ 15 : 32 ] We also hurt others. Hagar ends up as the collateral damage of this passage. Verse six, she is driven out.

Abram says, look, your servant's in your power, so he's continuing to try to have peace. Do to her as you please. Then Sarai dealt harshly with her and she fled from her.

Notice before that moment, the way that Abram and Sarai speak about Hagar. This is gonna become important in a moment. They are unable to refer to her by name.

Verse two, a female Egyptian servant. Sorry, verse two, go to my servant. Verse five, my servant.

Verse six, your servant. When it comes to Abram and Sarai, Hagar has no name. When we do things our way and not God's way, we end up using and dehumanizing the people around us.

[ 16 : 51 ] God's laws, what we're seeing here, are not arbitrary. They come out of his fatherly care that he wants only for us what is best.

And so Sarai and Abraham choose to learn that the hard way.

Sarai loses her servant. Abram loses his peace. Hagar loses her home.

everyone loses. Now it'd be easy for us at this point to throw them under the bus for what's happened here.

The reality is that what Hagar happens to her here is actually a common cultural practice. In the ancient Near East, if you can't have a kid and you're wealthy enough to have a servant, this is the accepted wisdom.

[ 17 : 49 ] This is the way of the world. This is just what you do, right? If you have enough money, if you have enough resources, why not? Just like Sarai, we are tempted to do things our way rather than God's way in the midst of our own impatience and pain.

Sarai has a hard time waiting 10 years. In our culture, we have a hard time waiting 10 days, if not 10 minutes.

Sarai and Abraham knew nothing of two-day prime delivery. We, in fact, want the most efficient way, right? We want things to be fast and practical.

We want to have justice now. And so instead of waiting on God to act, we do it ourselves through our gossip. We see riots more and more across our country as people believe it is up to us and only us to make things right.

You may be married and you've seen the dreams of what you thought your marriage would be shattered. and instead of doing the hard work of rebuilding, you bury yourself in kids or work.

[ 19 : 21 ] Maybe you're single and you want desperately to be married and you're tired of waiting. And so you decide, you know what I'm going to do?

I'm going to date someone who does not share my deepest commitments and values. because being with someone is better than no one, right? God has not brought me someone who believes in him.

I will find a Hagar. Of course, the problem is this. There are more, there's more than one way to be lonely. One of those is worse than the other.

Parents, temptation, right? like Abram is to want peace and comfort. And so you decide, you know, I'm not going to discipline my kids.

Of course, if you don't discipline now, things will be much, much worse later. We always constantly face this temptation, the temptation to do things the fast way rather than to wait for God.

[ 20 : 34 ] Amen. Where do we get the power though? Where do we get the power to do things God's way and not our way?

To find that out, we're going to have to move away from Abram and Sarai. They're negative examples for us and we have to turn to Hagar. Hagar here in this passage is the one person who is willing to trust God.

God. It's not the heroes of the faith who help us here. It's an unexpected character. It's the Egyptian slave woman.

She's the one who shows us what it looks like to trust God. In verse 6, she flees. In verse 7, we find out she's near the border of Egypt which makes sense, right?

Remember, she's an Egyptian woman. Of course, she is fleeing to head back home. It's possible that she became part of Abram and Sarai's family back when they were in Egypt.

[ 21 : 37 ] Remember, at the end of chapter 12. She's on the return. She's going back to her home. Verse 7, this angel of the Lord meets her. There's a debate over the angel.

People ask questions like, is the angel God? Is the angel a representative of God? I'm just going to make it really simple for us. Whatever the angel sees, God sees.

Whatever angel says, God says. Whether it's God, whether it's pre-incarnate Christ, whether it's an angel, those things are true, okay?

Abram and Sarai have had a hard call to wait. That's why Sarai accuses God. Verses 2 and 3, you haven't given me a child. Hagar Hagar also receives a hard call.

Verse 9, the angel of the Lord said to her, return to your mistress and submit to her. Return to the woman who won't call you by your name.

[ 22 : 45 ] Return to the house of dysfunction and shame and anxiety. return. It will not be a quick fix.

Return and just wait. Return to Sarai who's a hard mistress. Return to a place where you have a child but no power.

What does Hagar do? She takes God at his word and she goes back. We know that because in verses 15 and 16 it tells us she bore Abram a son.

What is it that's different about Hagar? Why is she able to trust God and return? It's for one reason and one reason only.

God and his overwhelming grace. Remember I told you this passage is painful and tender. It's painful because of human failing.

[ 24 : 02 ] It's tender because of God's mercy. Verse seven. The angel of the Lord found her. Hagar is not looking for God but God is looking for Hagar.

Verse eight. God addresses her by name. Hagar servant of Sarai where have you come from and where are you going?

this is the only time in the entirety of ancient Near Eastern literature that a God addresses a woman by name.

I'm going to say that again. This is the only time in ancient Near Eastern literature that a God addresses a woman by name.

Remember what Abram and Sarai did. They couldn't say Hagar's name. They could only say servant. And the reason is this that names are reserved for people of great power and influence and here God comes to this Egyptian woman who has no power no influence is pregnant and stuck in the desert.

[ 25 : 37 ] sees her not as a servant but as a daughter in need of help. Verse 8 he doesn't just call her by name he gives her dignity.

He engages her in conversation something Abram and Sarai never did. Where have you come from and where are you going?

Hagar is no longer a one way recipient of commands and orders she is a person to be loved and engaged.

God cares for those who have no power and no influence and he calls by name those who others will not name.

God does give her to return because the God who tells her to return shows her that he cares for the powerless and the downtrodden.

[ 26 : 50 ] God doesn't just give her dignity here though although he does do that he also gives her great hope. Verse 10 we have some practical promises here I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.

It's not just that God knows Hagar's name it's that now Hagar has a future. It's not all lost it's not all in vain no she's going to return and wait for God to do what he has said he will do.

It's not a dead end it's a future with many children. None of this by the way goes over Hagar's head.

Verse 13 she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her you are a God of seeing. Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.

Brothers and sisters when we know and believe that God looks after us we can wait as long as we need for him to fulfill his promise.

[ 28 : 22 ] I have seen him who looks after me. Verse 15 she goes back.

She goes back because God has given her dignity and given her a future. Of course it's going to be normal life right? We have this great mountaintop moment and it's also not the end of Hagar's struggles.

Her problems aren't all solved. Her relationship with Sarai will still be strained. In fact, if you stick with us for a couple more chapters, you're going to see that things for Hagar get worse.

But she's no longer alone. And that is enough. Christian, the Lord calls you by name as well.

When people look at you, they may see all sorts of things first. They may look at you and see your wealth or your poverty. They may see your power or your lack of power.

[ 29 : 48 ] They may see your status or your health or your unhealth. The Lord sees you as his children. He sees you as his people.

And I don't just say that as a sentimental thing. I say it because it's true. And I know it's true because our Lord Jesus says these things in the Gospels. Luke chapter 10 rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

John chapter 10 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. He doesn't see first your stereotypes or your failures.

Doesn't see you first as a soldier or a civilian. Doesn't see you as someone who's old or young.

He sees and knows your name. If you're not a Christian I imagine you know what it's like to be known only by your class or your abilities by labels that people put on you.

[ 31 : 19 ] The Gospel is the only thing that offers you freedom from that. God sees you even if the world doesn't.

He sees you even if you have nothing spectacular to offer. Verse 7 we saw that God pursues Hagar.

Of course this is an angel in one day in the desert. God pursues us even more. We know that. We've seen his pursuit for us in Jesus Christ.

Romans chapter 5 tells us but God chose his love for us in that while we were sinners Christ died for us. He sent his son like he sent the angel to Hagar when we weren't looking for him.

But he was looking for us. Just like he promised Hagar a future Christian he's done the same for you.

[ 32 : 32 ] Why do we do things God's way and not the easy way? What allows us to wait for 10 years and even more?

We do it for two reasons. God knows our name. He's given us a future and a hope. We might put it this way.

I will honor him for this I know. I belong to the Lord. I am not my own. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we do thank you and praise you that we belong to you, that you look for us even when we're not looking for you.

in the midst of our failure and mistakes, you meet us with great grace. We ask that you'd remind us of that truth, you'd drive it deep into our hearts, that it would cause us to follow you no matter what.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.