



Sermon – 10/02/2022
Phillip Bethancourt

Verses Covered This Week

Genesis 16:1 - 15

Isaiah 35:3 – 5

1 Corinthians 11:27 - 28

Let's open our Bibles together to Genesis chapter 16 as we continue our story through the life of Abram this morning. Genesis 16, beginning in verse 1. If you're a guest gathered with us whether in the room or catching us by video, welcome home. And I want you to know that after the sermon this morning, I want to encourage you to make your way to the Lord's Supper tables, grab those elements during our response time. We will be partaking of this family meal.

So, last week, Genesis 15, it's one of the high points of the entire Bible. We see God as a God who speaks. He speaks to broken people with a word of covenant. But now, this week, we don't just see Him as a God who speaks but a God who sees. God sees broken people and gives a word of comfort. I just want to say as a word of caution this morning, we're going to be dealing with some mature themes in an age-appropriate way. There's all sorts of trauma that we see play out in this text from infidelity to infertility to domestic violence and all sorts of issues. And as we come face to face with this trauma and with this pain, it's reminding us of the reality that in a broken world, everyone of us encounters hardship. And the question this text helps us to wrestle with this morning is, where do we find hope in the midst of hardship? Where can we find peace in the midst of pain? Let's see the answer to that question as we begin our time this morning in Genesis 16, beginning in verse 1 as it says this,

¹Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. ²And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³So, after Abram had lived ten 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. ⁴And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. ⁵And 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!" ⁶But 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.

Let’s pause to pray this morning as we turn our hearts to God’s word.

Father, we see the pain all over this passage. And I’m sure if we looked close enough, we could see the pain all over the hearts of many that are gathered here today to be confronted by Your word. And we’re asking in this moment, God, that in this time that you would have your way here, that Your Spirit would be poured out in a way that gives us a sense of hope and healing. A sense of comfort and peace. In fact, Lord, a peace that surpasses all understanding that guards our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. And we ask these things in His name. Amen.

So, when’s the last time you got in the in an argument in the car? Did that ever happen to some of you? I mean, some of you might be sitting there nudging the person next to you saying, on the way to church this morning, that’s the last time it happened. Well, I saw the study not long ago that said, more than half of people get into disagreements in the car. And I just think the other half isn’t being honest, right? Because it seems like that always is the case when you’re going somewhere. And what the study showed is that there is one thing in particular that causes the most frequent disagreements in the car. Do you know what it is? It’s the directions. Which direction should we go? Which path should we take? And I remember a while back in our family, my wife’s from Abilene, we were heading out to West Texas to visit her parents. And there’s a couple of different routes you can go. One that’s often shorter and faster and one that’s more scenic. And by scenic I mean it goes by Buc-ees. Okay, that’s the scene that I’m talking about. And so in this particular day, some of my family wanted to take the shorter route. I wanted to go the more scenic route. And so, my desires caused us to go in a different direction than was designed in order to reach the destination. And we set out and I’ve driven this road plenty of times. I didn’t need to pull up the GPS and follow things. But that was a big mistake in this case. Because there was road construction I wasn’t fully aware of on the path. And it sent us on this detour. And by the time I realized I needed some help, the cell phone service was down. The GPS location services were limited. And as a result, I was finding myself trying to make a path to the destination on my own. And I was looking at the map app and I could see where I was and I could see where I wanted to be. But it didn’t tell me the best way to get there, I had to find that way on my own. Which meant soon enough, we were driving through dirt roads in Central Texas, surrounded by cattle ranches on both sides. And the greater danger I felt was not what might happen to the car but the cynicism and frustration from the back seats of boys waiting for kolaches and beaver nuggets. How long, O Lord until we get there. You see, at the core of what happens in a moment like that is sometimes, even when we know the destination, our desires can cause us to take a different direction that sets us on a path apart from the design. And isn’t that where we see Abram and Sarai this morning? They know the destination. They heard it in Genesis 15. This covenant promise that one day God will raise up an offspring who will outnumber the stars of the heaven. And they know the nature of that promise. That God is going to bring them a child who He will use to raise this up. They know the destination. They know the direction He intends. But in their desire, yes, their good desire to have a child, to see the promise fulfilled. What happens is they take matters into their own hands. They begin to pursue God’s destination through their direction. They reject His design and pursue it on their own. Now, that’s an issue that we see show up here in Genesis 16 but it doesn’t stay there. Because far too often, we can find ourselves pursuing what we think is God’s

destination for our lives in directions that He never designed. And what we're going to find this morning as we come to this unusual text, is it brings us face to face with the hardship and with the hurt that so often in results as a consequence of our efforts to turn away from God and find His promise, His purpose, through our own plans and not His. I mean, think about it. Abram and Sarai have encountered all sorts of hardships. They've been through famines. They've faced wars. But now, they come face to face with one of the biggest battles you and I both encounter. That battle at the heart of the question, will we not just trust God's purpose but will we trust his plan? You know what I'm talking about? That doubt, that uncertainty, that frustration, that impatience, that can come into our lives. You see, we find what happens here. We see the high point of faith in Genesis 15. These great heights of faith and trusting God's covenant and right in the aftermath of that, we see it brought low in the great fall when they turn away from Him. And as we come face to face with the failure of Abram and Sarai in Genesis 16 it and the damage that it brings, what it's going to show us this morning is a way to know how God sees us in our hardship and He sustains us with hope.

So, let's notice the way that this hardship plays out beginning in verse 1. You're going to see that first, hardship happens when we resist the plan of God. Hardship happens when we resist the plan of God. And one of the things that we know about the Bible, especially in its treatment of the Old Testament, is it doesn't sugarcoat the story of the saints. It's raw. It's authentic. It's true to what happens. They don't brush over the mess that Abram and Sarai get into following this passage. And in the midst of this moment, we find a key problem, a root issue that shows up. And that is when the people of God try to pursue the promise of God apart from the plan of God. And when that happens, it brings pain. It brings hardship, difficulty, and suffering. And what we see here is there are several aspects of this hardship that we see show up when we resist the plan of God. So, notice back in verse 1 that hardship comes through broken trust. In verse 1, Hagar is coming face to face with the fact that she is barren. It speaks in verse 1 of her Egyptian servant. We know in Genesis 12, they went to Egypt in the famine and it tells us that they returned with servants, likely Hagar, came during that time. And she looks at her life. And what happens is when she sees her infertility, it leads to an instability that culminates in infidelity. She struggles to trust God. She knows the promise but she doubts the plan. She comes face to face each month with the fact that her cycle is starting over again and she is gripped by the reality that, "He has failed me. He has let me down." In fact, look at the beginning of verse 2 when it says,

²And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children.

So, in other words, she's not just doubting God's promise, she's blaming God for her problems. He's the one that made me bare it. This is His fault. Do you see the doubt that's there? That lack of trust on display. And let me say a word to those of you in the room or catching this by video who right now find yourself in the same spot. Barren. Infertile. Monthly disappointments. Sarai looks at that and it causes her to question God, not to trust Him. And that same challenge is before you, and in fact, before each one of us who find ourselves disappointed in the plans and in the timing of God. But you need to see something that happens beginning in the second half of verse 2. We find that hardship doesn't just come through broken trust but it also comes through broken vows. So, Sarai comes up with their own solution. She goes to Abram and says to him, here's what we're going to do. You're going to take my servant

and I'm going to give her to you as another wife and through her, you're going to conceive and we are going to bring God's promise to reality. And in that moment, she thinks that because God has broken His covenant promise with them that it's okay for them to break their covenant promise of marriage with one another. That broken trust leads to broken vows. So, what she says there in verse 2 at the second half of it, she says,

² Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.”

And listen to this at the end of verse 2,

And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

Can you hear an echo of Eden right there in the passage? When Adam listened to the voice of Eve, drawing and deceiving him into sinning as well. Now, the lesson here for you men is not the lesson, never listen to your wife. That could be the temptation. See, her voice led him astray. They, the, the, the picture, the lesson here is there is danger when the voice of others drowns out the voice of God in your life. That when their voice gives you more direction than His voice. And in this case, it happens through someone as close to him as possible. And what occurs as a result of that? What we find in verse 3 is there's a reversal of Genesis 12. Remember when Adam, when Abram and Sarai are facing the famine, they go to Egypt and he pretends as if Sarai is not his wife so that they can survive. Now, you see this reversal and it's Sarai wanting Abram to pretend that as if Sarai is not his wife anymore and that Hagar now is. You can see the way these vows are shattered. That broken trust in a broken timeline results in broken vows. Broken hearts. Broken bodies. A broken home. Sarai gives Hagar to Abram and Abram takes everything from Hagar. That's what we find now as we look down into verse 4. We see that hardship also comes through broken relationships. Because after he marries her and after she conceives, it's like an episode of Jerry Springer breaks out in verse 4. After the paternity test comes in, all mayhem breaks loose. Look at the second half of verse 4. It says,

⁴ And when she saw that she had conceived, Hagar looked with contempt on her mistress. ⁵And Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be on you!

And then she goes on to say,

⁵ 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!”

So, notice what happens. Broken trust leads to broken choices. That results in broken relationships. You can see the fractures all around this text. Hagar conceives and it fills her with the pride that causes her to look at Sarai with contempt. In response to that, Sarai is engulfed in self-pity and she is frustrated; disappointed not only that she conceived. After all, this was her idea but that now, that other woman looks at her with that contempt. That word contempt being the same word back in Genesis 12 in the calling of Abraham that it speaks about the way that the nations who dishonor him will be dishonored. There's a sense of dishonor. Judgement that Hagar is bringing against Sarai. And notice what's taking place in the middle of it. Abram's passivity. He just sits back. He does nothing to solve the problem. So, think about the combination here. You've got Hagar's pride. Sarai's pity. Abram's passivity. And when you

fuse those together, broken trust. Broken choices now lead to broken relationships. And what happens in the aftermath of this reality? You know what happens because you've lived this before. You have seen or been a part of moments in your life where broken choices led to broken relationships. People that you used to be close to, you have no contact with anymore. The one you could count on to be a friend that was closer than a brother who is now out of your life. That relationship has been shattered. That's what's the kind of broken relationships that are occurring here. And what happens in that aftermath? Look at one more effective hardship in this passage in verse 6. It shows us how hardship comes through broken people. Look at what verse 6 says,

⁶But 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.

So, in other words, after Sarai gives Hagar to Abram to have this child. Now, Abram gives Hagar back to Sarai for condemnation. For judgment. This word you see there in verse 6 that she dealt harshly is the exact same word you'll find in the book of Exodus when it speaks about how Pharaoh and the Egyptians dealt harshly with the Israelites. It is to afflict and oppress. It is to bring harm and pain. It's to humiliate. And just put yourself in Hagar's shoes for a moment here. Can you imagine the depth of her brokenness? Because she is being treated as the solution to someone else's problem. They're using her as a means to an end. And in that moment she doesn't just experience brokenness around her. She experiences brokenness within her. Abram may have used her body but Sarai now crushes her soul. She deals harshly with her. And what does she do? I mean, look at the end of verse 6. What would you do in that moment? It tells us, she fled from her. Things are so bad in this moment of difficulty that she would rather run into uncertainty than remain in the circumstances she finds herself in. I can't help but wonder this morning, how many of you find yourself in a place just like Hagar? Maybe you slipped in here a few minutes late on your own. Maybe you walked in here with a smile on your face that's hiding the wounds and the pain that is inside. Maybe you find yourself in a moment where broken trust or broken vows or broken relationships, broken people have caused you to come to a point where you don't know if you can endure the pain. If you're not sure that you can survive the suffering.

That's the beauty of this passage. It doesn't end in this moment. It goes on to show us a second thing we can't miss if we want to find hope in the midst of hardship. And here's what it is. It's that healing happens when we experience the presence of God. So let's pick up the passage now again down in verse 7. And here's what it says,

⁷The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai."

So, notice what happens here. Hagar runs from the pain of her hardship. She is a pregnant, single mom stranded in the wilderness. And the reality is that many of us find ourselves right next to her in the valley of despair this morning. In that wilderness of worry where the pain from our past is disrupting our pursuit of the present. It's distracting us from our promise of the future. And as we find ourselves in that moment, we're wrestling with the question, is there any hope? Is there any healing? See, hardship happens when we pursue the promise of God apart from the plan of God. But healing happens when we receive the promise of God through the

presence of God. And when you find yourself in a season of hardship, whether now or in the future, this passage is going to show us several ways that God can bring healing to your hardship. The first one's here in verses 7 and 8. The fact that healing after hardship comes through the presence of God. So, where do we see Hagar in this moment? Look back at the end of verse 7. It says, she's at a well of water by a place called Shur. Now, where is Shur? Shur was near Egypt. It appears that what happened is that when she faces hardship, she does what so often we are tempted to do which is she runs back towards home. She flew towards the safety and comfort of Egypt. She's trying to find protection through her past. But her help doesn't come by turning back to the past. Her help comes through the presence of God. Because you'll notice there in verse 7, there is a figure who appears. You see who it says it is? The angel of the Lord. This is the first time in the entire Bible we're introduced to this angel of the Lord. There are sometimes where the angel of the Lord appears like a messenger or an angel, like a Gabriel or a Michael who comes with a message on behalf of God. But then there times, including like this one, where it seems as if the angel of the Lord is an appearance of God Himself. That His presence comes and manifests itself amongst us. And the scholars believe that in situations like this, what you have is a moment where the Son of God comes down for a season, in the appearance even before he takes on flesh as Jesus, and the presence of God appears to people. And so just imagine this moment. We all know John 4 when Jesus appears to the woman at the well. That woman whose sin and suffering has led to scars and pain and hardship. Well, it turns out that's the second time the Son of God has appeared to a woman just like that at a well. The first one's right here. He shows up with His presence and that presence is the foundation for the healing that Hagar can experience in the midst of hardship. And that healing comes as we see in verse 8, when the presence of God appears to her with a set of questions that everyone of us needs to wrestle with when we find ourselves in the midst of pain. Look at those two questions there in verse 8.

⁸He said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?"

So, he asked her a question about her past and her purpose. Where have you come from? Where are you going? And it's not as if the angel of the Lord doesn't know the answer to these things. It's like when God calls to Adam in Genesis 3 and says, "Adam, where are you?" It's not because God is uncertain, but it's because He is using this to reveal her situation to her. She come face to face with their past. She comes face to face with her future. And when that happens, she's better positioned to find healing in the present. That path towards healing begins with the presence of God. But it doesn't stop there. Look with me down in verse 9. We'll see a second dimension of it. That healing after hardship also comes through the provision of God. So, pick up in the text with me. It says in verse 9,

⁹The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." ¹⁰The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." ¹¹And 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. ¹²He 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."

Man, this passage about a messy situation gets very complicated here, doesn't it? I mean, look back at the end of verse 9, it tells us there at the end of verse 9, return to your mistress and submit to her. And it seems on the face of it like the angel of the Lord is encouraging a survivor of domestic violence to return to her place of affliction. What do we make of this? Is that the lesson God wants us to take? Is that the pattern that He wants us to see? By no means. The reason that God calls her back to that place is because of the promise of His provision. He will care for her. He will provide for her. He will protect her. And what He knows is that the path toward blessing in her case comes through suffering. She's experienced that suffering before. She's vulnerable to it in the future; but he will sustain. He will provide. He will protect. And don't we see this pattern across the Old Testament as we anticipate the coming of Jesus? So often, the blessing is on the other side of the suffering. It's true with Isaac and with Jacob and with Joseph and with Moses, and with David and with Solomon. We see example after example where people endure the suffering for the sake of the promise. Why is that the case? It's because in those instances, it's anticipating what God is going to do for us in Jesus Christ. The One who achieves God's promise by experiencing pain. Whose suffering leads to our salvation. And this provision of protection that he gives to her as she goes back to this place of danger is coupled with another aspect of His provision right here. You'll see in verse 11 and 12. That it's not just a provision of protection but a provision of a promise. A promise of an offspring. And you see the language in verse 10. That it will be multiplied. That it won't be able to be numbered. It's like the blessing he's poured out on Abraham and Sarai. And he is speaking that word to her. This word of promise. And at the heart of that promise, verse 11, is a son whose name shall be Ishmael. You know what Ishmael means in the original language? Ishmael means the God who hears in our affliction. The God who listens to the cries of our pain. And isn't that just such a fitting image of what's happening there? This single pregnant mom running from danger, crying out for help. Everybody's passing on the other side of the road. No one comes to her rescue. But the angel of the Lord shows up with the presence of God. And when that happens, He comes with a promise. And the Promise reminds us of that universal reality that even when we see pain in our life, God has purpose in it. That what the enemy meant for evil, God turns to good. That's true for Hagar and true for each one of us.

Which brings us to the final reality that we see here as a source of hope in the midst of our hardship. We see that beginning in verse 13, healing after hardship comes through the providence of God. So, let's finish the here and notice how it finishes.

¹³So 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." ¹⁴Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. ¹⁵And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

We see the providence of God on display all over this passage. And what do we mean by providence? It's God's work to bring together His purposes even in the midst of a broken world. I mean, so just think about the very end of the passage in verses 15 and 16. We see, she listens to the angel of the Lord. She goes back to this place of danger and just as he promised that protection, she experiences it. She brings this baby to term and what does it say Abram does? Verse 15, Abram named this child Ishmael. So, Abram, this one who ran from God's plan, who resisted God's plan, who rebelled against it, is now, it appears under conviction, has turned back

from failure to faith, and now he's listening to God's direction. He gives the name to this child that God has commanded. That is the providence of God written all over it. But perhaps the best display of that providence right here in this passage is in what takes place in Hagar's response beginning in verse 13. God gives her a hope. She gives him a name. What is that name? Look at it there in verse 13. He says, she says, you are a God of seeing. You are a God of seeing. Now don't miss this moment. This is the only time in the Old Testament that a person gives a name to God. And who does it? Not one of the great people in the Hall of Faith celebrated in Hebrews 11. Not one of the key players in bringing about the covenantal promises. This broken woman filled with pain and suffering. When God sees her in her suffering, she responds to that by giving Him a name. By recognizing His providence in our life. Ishmael's name reminds us that He's a God of hearing. This name she gives reminds us that He's a God of seeing. But you what you might miss when you look at the text is in verse 14, the name of this well, Beer-lahai-roi. What it means in the original language is it speaks of this well as the well of the living one who sees. Think about the providence of God in her pain. When no one else was listening to her cries, he's a God who hears. When no one was searching for her in the wilderness, He's a God who sees. When she thought she was on the doorstep of death, He is a God who lives. That same reality gives us hope for healing in our hardship today. That even if no one hears your cries for help, He's a God who hears you. That even if no one sees the pain and suffering you're in, He is a God that sees you. And even if you don't think that you can make it through. That death would be better than the moment you find yourself in. He is a living one who provides protection for and me. And I want you to see the way these threads all come together in Isaiah chapter 53. We'll have it here on the screens. This is one of the most amazing promises of the deliverer, of the Messiah, of the Christ, and the entire Old Testament. And that weaves together these things that God hears, that God sees, that God lives. And it's anticipation of the healing that will come through the one that God will send. Notice what it says in Isaiah 53, beginning in verse 3. Speaking of the coming Messiah, it says this,

³He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

⁴Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and get this last part, and with his wounds we are healed.

See, God's promise is that He would raise up and send forth a suffering servant that would not just bring healing to people like the suffering servant Hagar in verse 16, but to each one of us. And the reason that's true is because Jesus has gone out into the wilderness on our behalf. He has taking on the sins of the world. He has died in our place. He has suffered the judgement of God. He has defeated death to make a way of healing for you and me. By his wounds we can be healed. Why? Because Jesus hears. Jesus sees. Jesus lives. Jesus heals. That's the hope we can find in the midst of hardship this morning. Which is so fitting why on a message like today from a passage like this that we get to come to the Lord's table. Because one of the ways that He reminds us of the healing that He provides for us through Jesus Christ is through this family meal that we celebrate. Where we come face to face with our own brokenness. The brokenness of our choices. The brokenness of our lives. The brokenness of our relationship. Which points us back to the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. And this is a family meal for you if you know Jesus and you're walking with Him as a baptized believer. Here in just a moment, we

want to invite you to make your way and take of these elements and we will enjoy this family meal together immediately after this song. But before we close with prayer, I want to challenge you with this word from Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 in verse 27. He says,

²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Let's pray together now as we examine our hearts.

Father, we open our lives to You. We may be hiding from others but we know we cannot hide from the God who hears. From the God who sees. From the God who lives. And Lord, I'm lifting up those in our midst who are broken, hurting, filled with pain, disappointment, even despair, God. Lord, that You would bind up the broken. That You would bring healing to the wounded. That You would give hope to the hurting today. We ask all these things in Christ's name. Amen.