

March 20th

NEIGHBOR PROBLEMS

“And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him, and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy. He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him. (Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father.) And Abimelech said to Isaac, “Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we.”” **GENESIS 26:12-16**

“It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood, a beautiful day for a neighbor, would you be mine?

Could you be mine? I have always wanted to have a neighbor just like you, I've always wanted to live in a neighborhood with you.” Ah...Mister Rogers' Neighborhood...has there been anything quite like it? Mister Rogers transcended time and challenged the status quo. Being good neighbors can be quite challenging at times. It depends on you, and it depends on your neighbors. Got any stories of dogs pooping in your yard or noisy neighbors? Maybe they can tell some stories about you. It's not just a problem in our day when fences have become the norm and people want to live in the country, so they don't have to be near people. It's a problem in Isaac's day. What does God want to teach us today with the people of Gerar and Isaac?

A welcome mat has been replaced by envy and conflict in the middle of Genesis 26. Even as Isaac failed to trust God, we see that God remains faithful to His promises. Verse twelve describes the highest epitome of farming success: “And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold.” But how did the Philistines respond? They responded with envy which produced vandalism: “Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father.” That's quite a reaction! Isaac moves on to other places, and the Philistines continue to follow him. It's only by the third well that they finally leave him alone. This third well is where we see Isaac's perspective on all the conflict: So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, “For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.” Remember, this was a period of wandering for Isaac. Gerar was not where Isaac started. Famine drove him there. But God. God protected Isaac and “made room for him” in a land where he wasn't welcome anymore.

God doesn't leave us at Rehoboth. Instead, Isaac continues his journey to Beersheba. And God doesn't waste any time when Isaac arrives. That very same night he reminds Isaac of his protection and the promise that he'd already been given. God repeats some of the “I wills” at the moment. It appears that Isaac may have had some discouragement and was tired from all the tension with the Philistines. But God. God reminds him again that He gave His promise to Abraham and He's giving it to Isaac.

Men, what does God want to say to you from this story? We continue to be reminded that our discouragements, distractions, and conflicts aren't much different from the stories of God's people. And they needed to be reminded often that God will be faithful to His promises. We are the same way...we need reminded that whatever we struggle with or whoever we struggle with doesn't change God's perfect plan and promise. But here's the catch...we often go to anyone or anything else other than God to reassure us that we will succeed in our lives. But God. God is faithful to reveal His perfect plan...in His Bible. We just have to go to the pages of the Bible every day to forget about ourselves and fix our eyes on Jesus. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Will you commit to reminding yourself from the Bible about your great God?

Spend some time reflecting on some promises of God that are especially encouraging to you. Share some of them with someone else today.

For Further Reading: Genesis 26:17-33