

When God Keeps His Promise — Delivery

Transcript

Genesis 21:1–21 (CSB) • Wes Terry • Sunday, March 17, 2024 • Faith in the Waiting

⚠ AUTO-GENERATED TRANSCRIPT — *verify against the audio before quoting publicly.* Produced from a Descript transcription of the Broadview Church sermon recording and lightly cleaned (filler words removed, obvious mis-hears of names and Scripture references corrected). No timestamps. This is not a publication-ready manuscript and it is not Wes's exact words for print. Check any line against the recording before it goes on a graphic, in an email, or in a book.

Thanks to the team for leading us in worship. If you have your Bible, you can open it to the book of Genesis. We're going to be in Genesis chapter 21. I don't know if—can y'all hear me out there? Am I on? All right. As we think about the goodness of God and the greatness of God, it may create in you a desire, as it does for many people, to want to do great things for God. Maybe when you were young you had visions of grandeur of what your life would be.

Maybe you wanted to be president of the United States but quickly outgrew that, or maybe you wanted to be a fireman. Some of you may be that, some of you wanted to be an architect or something, something big. Some of you maybe even wanted to go into ministry. Give your life vocationally to the Lord. We all have dreams and when you come to know the Lord and really fall in love with the Lord, you want to channel your life in a direction that brings glory to Him and attempt great things for him and sees amazing things done through your life for the glory of God.

And that's a good thing. I think God has given us a desire for greatness, each and every one of us. But one of the things that you learn really quickly as you read through the scripture and as you live your life as a believer is that before God deploys you to do incredible and great things, He first prepares you. Before God gives you a big platform, you go through a process of preparation. There's a time of testing before everybody you know begins to see and pay attention to the big things that are happening through your life.

And it's that season of waiting that a lot of us begrudge. And Abraham is one example of someone who before God did great things through his life. First the Lord had to take him through a season of preparation and testing so that he could position him to see those great things happen. And some of those tests Abraham passed with flying colors, and some of those tests Abraham failed miserably. And I think there's a lot of similarities between our lives and the life of this OG of faith, Abraham, Father Abraham. One of the things that is

similar is that when we don't like God's timing, a lot of us take matters into our own hands and kind of rush the project.

Anybody ever done that before? Lord, I know that this is what you want. I know this is where you're taking us, but you're too slow, so let me help. And Abraham did the same thing. Sometimes we're like Abraham in that God comes down to pay us a visit and explain things to us in a way that we can understand so that we don't keep making the same mistakes over and over again. But we just don't have ears to hear what the Lord wants to say. And Abraham was very similar. There were certain things God was trying to tell him and it just wasn't getting through his thick skull.

Sometimes God comes over to visit, God's ready to show up and create breakthrough in our life. But for some of us, just like Abraham, right as we're on the very brink of breakthrough, we blow it. And that was true of Abraham. He was right on the brink of God doing amazing things in and through his life and he blew it. And so if you feel like a failure sometimes in your relationship with God, don't fear. You're not alone. One of the founding fathers of the faith, Abraham, was just as broken.

He failed the tests of God just as often as many of us do. And what you discover in the book of Genesis is that in every one of those seasons, whether Abraham was on top of his game or at the bottom of his game, God was faithful to him. That God's grace was greater than the sin in Abraham's life. And God was faithful to his promise, even when Abraham wasn't always faithful to the Lord. And that's been the recurring theme, message after message after message, from the from the beginning of this series back in Genesis chapter 16.

Now that we're at the conclusion of the series in Genesis chapter 21, what we're going to see is that God keeps his promise. God is always faithful to keep his promise, and he keeps his promise in the way that he said he would keep his promise. He keeps his promise at the time he said he was going to keep his promise. And because God keeps his promises, we can base our life on his word. And I think that's a wonderful thing because there's a lot of people in the world who make promises and break them.

Amen. You ever had somebody tell you they're going to do something and they didn't do what they said they were going to do? Yeah. Some of us have people in our life who do that so often that when they actually do what they said they were going to do, we're like, we don't have eyes to see it, right? Whoa, whoa, you know, I can't believe you showed up on time, or I can't believe the dishes are done. Or you finally fixed the fence or whatever the case, whatever the case may be.

But God never fails to keep his promise. We're never people who have to be disappointed that God didn't come through when he said he would do or what he said he would do. Somebody said this week when I was reading studying for this message that there were 7,474

promises of God in the Scripture Now I did not go through every reference and check to see if it was a promise of God and I'm pretty sure there's disagreement because I read another list and there was another another number of promises. So I don't know if it's 7,474.

Or seven thousand four hundred and seventy-three or seventy five. I'm not sure how many promises there are, but that's about a hundred and sixteen promises a book. That's a lot of promises of God. Some of those promises have been kept and been fulfilled. Some of those promises we're yet to wait on to be fulfilled. Promises of the second coming of Christ, promises of the resurrection of the dead, promise of heaven coming, invading earth and swallowing up this brokenness in this world. And Abraham had a lot of promises of God that he was waiting on too.

The Lord promised Abraham three things, three L's is the way I remember it. I'm just going to give you a promised land. I'm going to give you a promised line, a lineage. You're going to have descendants that are as numerous as the stars in the sky. And then he said, through this promised lineage, I'm going to bless all the nations of the earth, talking about the Lord Jesus. So land, lineage, and Lord. Abraham had kind of seen some of those promises come to fruition, but other of those promises he had not yet seen come to fruition.

And as he waited on the Lord, he saw the Lord teach him things and grow him in ways that he simply could not have done without the wait. And so sometimes God uses the waiting intentionally. To put us in a position where we can finally receive the promise that He's promised to give. So with that in mind, let's turn to Genesis chapter 21. We're going to read verses 1 to 7. And we're going to see the birth of this promised child, Isaac, that Abraham had been waiting on for years and years, 25 plus years to be exact.

He's about 90, he's about a hundred years old, Sarah's about 90 years old, and this promised child is finally born. So it says in verse one of chapter twenty one, the Lord came to Sarah, and I want you to notice how often the activity of the Lord is emphasized. The Lord came to Sarah just as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah just what he promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age at the appointed time God had told him. Abraham named his son, who was born to him.

The one Sarah bore to him, emphasizing it actually kept his promise in the way he was going to keep his promise. Isaac. And when his son Isaac was eight years old, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded him on the eighth day. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him, and then Sarah said, God has made me laugh. And every one who hears of this news will laugh with me. And she also said, who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? And yet I have borne a son for him in his old age.

And so you see, just plain as day, God keeps his promises. One of the things about how God keeps his promises that I think Moses is emphasizing in this passage is that when God keeps his promises, he is faithful to the what and faithful to the when. I know a lot of us sometimes disagree with God's timing when he talks about his promises in our life, but he is always faithful to both, both the what of the promise and the when of the promise. Now sometimes he doesn't tell us when his promises are going to be fulfilled, just like he didn't tell Abraham.

But when he visited him in chapter 18 and said it's going to be about a year from now that I come and Sarah's going to have a child, it was exactly around a year after that fact that God came. He keeps his promise in a way that it maximizes his glory and not our own. And the reason I say that is because of Sarah's comments, the Lord has made me laugh. You guys remember when Sarah first laughed? It was in Genesis chapter 18. In Genesis chapter 18, the Lord comes to visit Abraham.

It's a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ with two angels. And Jesus asks Abraham, where's your wife Sarah? And Abraham says, she's outside listening in. She's outside the tent. And Sarah was listening in outside the tent, listening to Abraham and Jesus talk, and Jesus says to Abraham, Your wife Sarah is going to conceive and bear a son around this time next year. It's in Genesis chapter 18, verses 12 to 14 I think I've got it up here on the screen if you'll turn there. Genesis chapter 18, verse 14. Sarah hears that and she raises the question, or she actually starts to laugh to herself, after I'm worn out and my Lord is old, will I have delight?

In other words, how in the world is the Lord going to make me pregnant when I'm 90 years old? And then the Lord asks Abraham, why is your wife laughing? Is anything impossible for the Lord? At the appointed time I will come back to you, and about a year from now she would have a son. Now if you were to ask the question, why does God wait? Many times the reason that God is waiting is not to make us miserable. Many times the reason God is waiting is because in the waiting He is able to prove Himself powerful in ways that the absence of the wait would not have revealed.

And so he picks a barren woman, someone who could not have children. He waits until that barren woman is close to 100 years old, or even if you were a fertile myrtle, probably not having, you know, at 90 at 90 years old He waits until it's absolutely impossible for human ingenuity and human wisdom and power to create the miracle. He waits until all hope is lost and it is at that point that he proves himself faithful. Why? So that he can get the glory and nobody else. Sometimes God's way, sometimes the way God answers his promise is to maximize his glory and not our own.

A similar kind of thing happens in the Gospels with the birth of Jesus. You remember the angel comes to Mary and says, hey Mary, I know you're a virgin, but you're about to give birth to the Son of God. And Mary asked the question, how in the world is that going to be

true because I hadn't been sleeping with nobody? I'm now I'm engaged to be married to this guy named Joseph But we hadn't done no hanky panky. And there's no way I can have a baby if there's none of that stuff going on.

And what does he say? The Holy Spirit will come upon you. And the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And therefore the one's going to be called the Son of God. God waits until the absolute last minute when all hope is lost. And he picks people and circumstances where every attempt of human achievement has failed. It is at those times and with those people that God proves himself faithful and he gets all the glory. And so you ask the question, well, what do I need to bring to the table for God to keep his promise in my life?

How do I contribute? How can I put my part in and prove myself? And the answer to that question is nothing. You don't get to bring anything to the table. That's the whole point of Christianity. You bring your nothing, and when you bring your nothing and you are completely emptied of self and pride and arrogance and all the things that come with kind of adding to your salvation and adding to your deliverance, when you bring nothing to the table and say, nothing in my hands I bring, it's only to the cross I cling, it is at that moment that God saves us.

And it is at those moments that God keeps his promises in such a way that everybody who sees it and everybody who experiences it realizes God gets the glory. He's faithful to the what. He's faithful to the when. And when he does it, he does it in a way that he maximizes his glory as we bring nothing to the table. I wonder if we really believe that if we wouldn't live differently. If we really believe that it was God and God alone who creates the breakthrough in our life, I wonder if we wouldn't pray differently.

Instead of praying, God, give me strength to X, Y, and Z, we would say, God, would you help me to depend fully and solely on you for X, Y, and Z. I wonder if when we see things like baptisms or growth in our churches we're seeing right now, instead of saying, wow, those the band and the music program or the kids program and all the different things, if we wouldn't say, man, isn't God amazing? Isn't God good? This isn't anything that's been produced by human effort or achievement. It's something that the presence and power of God has produced because we have become dependent, wholly dependent on Him to produce it.

I wonder how many of us are missing out on certain breakthroughs in our life and certain promises of God being answered because we're still holding the reins. And we're still trying to produce the outcomes instead of humbling ourselves and asking God to do what only He can do. He's faithful to the what, He's faithful to the when. And when He answers prayer and delivers on His promise, He gets all the glory. Now the passage kind of transitions after that in verse eight and following and it I'm just going to call this heading baby mama drama.

I got that from somebody else I was listening to. I just love it so much. In chapter twenty-one, verse eight it says that the child, this is Isaac, when he grew and was weaned Abraham held a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son mocking. Which son? Not Isaac, but Ishmael. Ishmael is the son of Hagar, the one Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham. So she said to Abraham, Drive out this slave with her son, for the son of this slave will not be a co-heir with my son Isaac.

And so Sarah goes full mama bear mode on Ishmael. Now, for those of you who are not familiar with the backstory, Ishmael was a son born between Abraham and Hagar. Hagar was not originally Abraham's wife. Originally Hagar was a servant of Sarah. And what happened in Genesis chapter 16 is that Sarah and Abraham got tired of waiting on God. And they said, since God's not coming through the way we think he should, and with the timing we think he should, let's just take matters into our own hands and do it our way.

And barren since I'm barren, Sarah said, since I can't have any children, what I'm going to do, which was commonly accepted in the time, is I'm going to pick a surrogate and I'm going to have my made Hagar basically get married and have relations with Abraham and the child that they produce together will be the child of the promise. And so that's what they do. She basically puts Hagar in Abraham's lap. Abraham and Hagar conceive, a child is born. And all heck breaks loose. It was terrible. Hagar begins to mistreat Sarah.

Sarah gets mad and begins to abuse and mistreat Hagar. The abuse gets so bad that Hagar eventually leaves the house. And had it not been for an outside intervention from the Lord, while they were in the desert saying, You need to return home. If you'll return home, I'll bless you. I'll bless this child Ishmael, but you've got to go back. Had it not been for that intervention of the Lord, they would have destroyed their family. But she returns. But some things didn't change, right? There are certain sins that are forgivable, but the effects of those sins are not erasable.

And the effect of that sin in Genesis chapter sixteen is that this boy Ishmael, who is now probably sixteen years old, he's grown up thinking, there's no other kids here, I guess I'm the child of the promise, and then God comes through on his promise, and now Ishmael's thinking this guy's a threat to my inheritance. This guy is bad news bears. And so he begins to mock him and he begins to mistreat him. And what you see in Ishmael really is a symbol of life in the flesh. And some of this is not his fault, right?

He's a victim of his circumstances. He didn't get to choose how he was born and to whom he was born and the events surrounding us birth and so we got to be careful not to be too hard on Ishmael but he's choosing to mock this kid. He's choosing to make fun of the child of the promise. He's choosing to resist the promise of God which comes as a result of faith, and it's not surprising to see him resist because he's a symbol of life in the flesh. Hagar is a symbol of life in the flesh.

That whole union is a symbol of life in the flesh. And so what Sarah is seeing is this child is resisting what God is trying to do through the my promised child. This child of the flesh is resisting what God is doing through this promised child of faith. And they've got to separate. We've got to drive this kid out of the house. And if that seems harsh, I agree. It seems kind of harsh. But it is exactly how the New Testament explains this arrangement. If you go to the book of Galatians in Galatians chapter 4, the Apostle Paul talks about the child of the promise and the child of faith.

By the way, if you're taking notes, I think I skipped over a blank. So when God keeps a promise, it requires total submission and obedience. And this is exactly what God is requiring of Abraham in this moment and having to drive away this child. So if you'll go to Galatians chapter 4, this is verses 28 and following, this is the Apostle Paul kind of commenting on this Old Testament story of the promised child and Isaac and Ishmael who was who is driven out. And what he creates is a contrast between the child of faith and the child of the flesh.

And he says the child of the faith, or the spirit of the flesh and the spirit of faith cannot coexist without conflict. So he says, you two brothers and sisters, just like Isaac, are children of the promise. Remember, Isaac was the promised child. Isaac is pointing to the ultimate promised child, which is Jesus Christ. And when we are in Jesus Christ, we are children of the promise. So we are in Christ, we're children of the promise, but just as then the child born as what? As a result of the flesh, persecuted the one born as a result of the spirit, so also now.

In other words, in the church there in Galatia, there were people who were saying Jesus is great. Salvation by grace through faith, that's fine, but it's not sufficient. It's not enough. You got to kind of have faith, grace plus works plus circumcision. And Paul is basically saying that's like trying to have Isaac in the house with I mean that's like trying to have Ishmael in the house with Isaac. That's like trying to have your cake and eat it too. You're trying to keep the flesh and life separated from God, life without faith and life with faith in the same house in the same heart.

It won't happen. They won't coexist peaceably. Just like with Genesis, so also now you've got to drive the son of the slave woman out of the house. The son of the slave woman will never be co-heir with the son of the free woman. In other words, there's only one way to be saved. Salvation comes by grace through faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone. You can't earn your stripes, you can't earn your way to heaven, and at the same time recognize I can't earn my way to heaven. It's one or the other.

And that's the dilemma Abraham faces in his house. Am I going to accommodate the spirit of the flesh or am I going to am I going to protect the spirit of faith? And so what do you think he's going to do? Well for Abraham it was a difficult decision. Just like for us, it's a difficult

decision. Why? Because it wasn't just a moral decision. If it was just a moral, spiritual decision, maybe it would be a little bit easier, but it's a difficult decision because Ishmael is Abraham's son. In fact, in verse 11, if you go there in Genesis chapter 21, it says that it was very distressing to Abraham.

Why? Because Ishmael was his son. And if you compare the way Abraham sees Ishmael with the way Sarah sees Ishmael, there's a big divergence Sarah looks at Ishmael and says, that is the slave girl's son. That is not my son. I want nothing to do with that. But for Abraham, it's from his loins. This is my baby. This is my boy. And he it's not his fault that him and my him and his that me and his mother were in sin when he was conceived. It's not his fault that God didn't choose him, that God is not going to carry the covenant promise through him.

And so I'm sure he was p being very nuanced and justifying things and being very difficult. And when it says he was distressed, it doesn't mean he was like stressed out. It means he was mad He's angry. And he's angry probably at Sarah because Sarah, this was your idea in the first place, and now you want me to drive him out, but Sarah wasn't wrong. And that's essentially what the Lord says to Abraham. Your wife isn't wrong. The spirit of the flesh and the spirit of faith can't coexist without conflict.

So in verses 12 to 13 God said to Abraham, Don't be distressed about the boy and about your slave. Whatever Sarah says to you, listen to her, because your offspring will be traced through Isaac. And I will also make a nation of the slave son because he is your offspring. In other words, your wife is right and you are wrong. And every husband loves that conversation with the Lord. Just as an aside, guys, for those of you who rightly sense a divine calling to lead in your home spiritually. To be the spiritual leader of your home.

There's a brand of complementarianism that says, since I'm the spiritual leader of the home, what my wife thinks is unimportant. Or what my wife says doesn't matter. And this is just a prime example, one among many in the scriptures that say just because you're called to lead in the home doesn't mean you're not supposed to listen to your wife. Especially when it comes to your children. Here's why I say that. I think moms have a superpower when it comes to intuitions about their children. And what Sarah had was a spiritual intuition that this child is not just a threat to my son's physical safety, this child is a threat to our family's future.

This if this doesn't get remedied, then God's will for our future will not happen. And so we've got to drive him out. And even though Abraham was distressed about it was difficult, he was mad about the decision. Eventually he knows deep down because of this conversation with the Lord it's the right thing to do. Now I'm not saying that the way they're going to do it is correct. I don't think the way they go about it is all that great, and I'm not saying that Sarah's motivations were completely pure or right, but the point is you can't you cannot harvest the fullness of God's blessing in your life while simultaneously accommodating the flesh.

So when I say flesh, what I mean by that is just living the Christian life outside of faith in God. It's kind of like living life on your own terms, living life in your own strength and power, not depending on the Lord, relying on the Lord, not being obedient to the Lord, but doing it your own way. You can't accommodate that spirit in your life and simultaneously harvest the fullness of God's promise because those spirits are contradictory. They're at odds with one another. They're hot, they're always fighting against one another.

And Abraham, as Sarah is pointing out to Abraham, it's one or the other. You can't have the fullness of what God wants for our family while accommodating the flesh. And I think there's maybe some of us here this morning who, you know, we would say things like, well, it's not their fault. And they are my friends, and we used to have we have all this history together, and it's some of some of the reason things are off is my own foolishness. And we could nuance it and explain it away and all of these things, but at the end of the day, there's a sense in which God has a promise for your life.

God has a future for your life. And that promise and future is being undermined because you keep accommodating this old life. You keep accommodating the flesh. And there's a sense in which God is saying there needs to be a break. You got to send the son of the slave away. You've got to cut that part of your life off if you want the fullness of what God has for you. Next. Now the ultimate promise is not a promised child with Isaac. The ultimate promise is salvation. The ultimate promise, Isaac points to Jesus.

Jesus is our Savior. So there's a sense in which Jesus Christ wants to give you life and life abundant. He wants to bless you. He wants to transform you. He wants to give you a life like you can't even imagine. But there are things in your life which are putting that promise at threat. And some of these are people, some of these are lifestyle decisions, some of these may be commitments that you've made in the past. And the Lord is saying through his word this morning, you can't have the fullness of what I want for you if you keep this in your life.

This has to go. And so what does Abraham do? Well, he makes a choice. He makes the right choice. Verse 14. 14 to 16, early in the morning, notice it's right away, he doesn't dilly-dally. Right in the early in the morning, Abraham got up, he took bread and a water skin, and he put them on Hagar's shoulder, and he sent her and the boy away. So she left and she wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. And when the water skin when the water in the skin was gone, she left the boy under one of the bushes and went and sat at a distance about a bowshot away, probably about thirty-five, fifty yards.

For she said, I cannot bear to watch the boy die. And so while she sat at a distance, she wept loudly. Now I say this is the right decision in the wrong way because Abraham does not set them up for success. Abraham is sending them off to Egypt in the middle of a desert. There's no way they would have lived with three gallons of water and some bread. Abraham had

three hundred and eighteen trained militiamen. Abraham had relationships in the region that he could have used to set this woman and her child up for success.

He had all these different things at his disposal, but he doesn't use them. Why? Well, I don't know why. I don't know. Maybe he was trying to sabotage it so that I the Ishmael would have to come home. Maybe Sarah's was like, if you make it easy on them, I'm you know, you know, I don't know what she was saying. But the point is it was the right decision, but not done in exactly the right way. But even though it wasn't done in the right way, what you see is God's faithfulness to everyone involved, irrespective of their unbelief and failure.

Look at verse 17. Isaac's about 16 years old. At this point, he's rejected. He's got a father wound. He's about to die in the desert. But remember, God made a promise to bless Ishmael. And so he says in verse 17, God heard the boy crying. It's kind of a play on words because Ishmael means God who hears. And here it is, God hearing in verse 17, the boy crying. The woman is weeping, right? She's weeping at a distance, but God doesn't hear Hagar, God hears Ishmael. And then notice how God is faithful.

It is the angel of the Lord, not an angel, the angel of the Lord, called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, what's wrong, Hagar? Don't be afraid, for God has heard the boy crying from the place where he is. Get up and help the boy up and grasp his hand, for I will make him into a great nation. And then when Hagar, I think, responds to that invitation, God opens her eyes and she saw a well. And so she went and filled the water skin and gave the boy a drink.

And God was with the boy, and he grew, and he settled in the wilderness and became an archer. And he settled in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt. And so what you see here is the faithfulness of God to everybody involved, even though everybody involved had some failures. And unbelief. You see the unbelief of Abraham and that he didn't want to do the right thing. You see the unbelief of Sarah and being kind of mean-spirited and hostile, you see the unbelief of Hagar, in that even when God delivers her and saves her and her child, she goes and marries him off to a pagan Egyptian instead of marrying him to a God-fearing worshipper of Yahweh.

And then you see the failure of Ishmael in that he's here because of his own mockery and laughter. Of Isaac. Everybody has failed in this episode, and though even though all that's true, God is still faithful. And that's the whole point of the book of Genesis. That's the whole point of this story. That's really the whole point of the Bible. Even in the face of unbelief. And failure, God is faithful still. And that's true for you and for me as well. There may be a sense in which you're here this morning, and the reason you're here is because your life is a mess and you feel like a failure, and you've been resisting the promise, you've been resisting God's will for your life, and you're asking the question, is God does God still care?

Can God still use me? And the word of the Lord from you is the word of the Lord to Hagar. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. Even though everybody in this story is bad, one person in this story treats everybody good. And that person is Jesus. They say, how do you know it's Jesus? Well it says the angel of the Lord. Sometimes in the Old Testament, when it says the an angel of the Lord, it's talking about like a Gabriel or an angel. But a lot of times in the Old Testament when it says the angel of the Lord, it's a reference to Jesus.

This is the same the angel of the Lord that met Hagar last time in Genesis chapter 16. And wooed her back to himself. This is Jesus being good to Hagar, even though Hagar wasn't ultimately good to Jesus. This is Jesus being good to Abraham and to Sarah and to Ishmael, even though Abraham and Sarah and Ishmael weren't always good to Jesus There is no hero in this story other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Everybody in this story is bad. Okay? The moral of this story is not Isaac good, Ishmael bad, Abraham good, Hagar bad.

That's not the moral of the story. The moral of the story is everybody's bad but Jesus. The only person good to everybody is Jesus, and Jesus is always good to all. And so in his kindness and his grace, he says to Ishmael to Hagar, don't be afraid. Look up. Here's a well. And so she goes, she gets the water of the well, the boy is delivered, and ultimately God keeps his promise and Ishmael becomes the source of incr of incredible wealth and prosperity. And even today, there are nations that come from the tribe of Ishmael.

We know mostly as the Arabs. A lot of the Arab peoples find their origin story in Ishmael. And one of the descendants of Ishmael, a very famous Arab by the name of Muhammad. Have you ever heard of him? Muhammad was the founder of a one of the big monotheistic religions in the world called Islam. And to this day, people who subscribe to Islam see Ishmael as their founding father. And once a lifetime, I think, they will make a trip called the Hajj. You guys ever heard of the Hajj? The Hajj is a journey that Muslims make, and guess the destination that they go to it's a city called Mecca.

And guess what's in Mecca? There's a well. And guess where that well originated? It originated right here in Genesis chapter 21. They call it the Zamzam well. And what Muslims do during the Hajj as they make their way to Mecca is they go and they reenact this story. Except they tell the story differently. It's interesting. In Islam Ishmael is not the rejected child. Ishmael is the promised child. What they do is they invert it and reverse it. They reverse Sarah out for Hagar and they reverse Ishmael out for they rever Isaac out for Ishmael.

And so Hagar is the promised wife, Ishmael is the promised child Sarah is the rejected wife and Isaac is the rejected child. In other words, they take Judaism and say it's the opposite. They take Christianity and say it's the opposite. But that's not the only thing they reverse. And at the end of the day, I think that's really the main point of this chapter. They also

reverse the point of the story. The point of the story is not Isaac good, Ishmael bad. The point of the story is God's promise is received by faith.

And that when you reject God's promise, what you're ultimately rejecting is a life of faith. What you're ultimately embracing is a life in the flesh. That's what Ishmael represents. And even when God blesses Hagar and gives her this well, and he blesses Ishmael and makes him into this great nation, never once do they repent. And get on God's program. Never once do they say, okay, God is right, Isaac is the son of the promise. They persist in their unbelief. And they develop a whole system, a whole religion based on not salvation by grace through faith, but a whole system based on salvation by works.

If I try hard enough and I do enough good things, and if I can just maybe if I can be a suicide bomber, if I can go above and beyond, then God will be pleased with me, then I can go to heaven when I die. And they have no hope of salvation. They have no security. They have no certainty that they'll go to heaven when they die because they're operating in the flesh instead of in the spirit. They're operating by works instead of by faith. And the point of Genesis 21 is God is faithful to his promise.

He has been faithful to his promise. And his promise has been preeminently fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. All of God's promises are yes and amen in Jesus. But what we need to come to a place of doing is getting past the blessings of God. Looking beyond the material prosperity and God's given me this and that and these things, getting beyond the flesh and the material things, and beginning to see the man behind the blessing. The source of the blessing. Beyond the blessing and behind the blessing is the true source, and that true source is Jesus.

The well exists because Jesus created the well. So stop focusing on the well and focus on the author of the well, and that's Jesus Christ. Just like the other woman at the well. You remember this in John chapter 4? There's a woman at the well, Samaritan woman talking to Jesus, and Jesus says, hey, give me a drink. And they have this kind of interesting conversation. And Jesus says, well, I've got water. If you drink of this water, you'll never thirst again. And she's immediately focused on the material. What do you mean water that never makes you thirst again?

And Jesus says, no, this is a spiritual water. This is a living water. This is a water that I can give you because of who I am. And if you'll repent and believe in me, your life will be changed forever. But you can only receive this water by faith. Not by effort, not by works. And the same thing is true of Ishmael, the same thing is true for us. The true promise of God can only be received by faith. So as we bring our time to a close, here's how I'd like us to apply the message.

I think there's a lot of us here this morning who have kind of received the promise of God and salvation. But there are things in our life that we're accommodating that are putting that promise at threat. There may be greater things that God wants to do in you and through you that that you are allowing to be undermined. Because you're accommodating a spirit that doesn't need to stay. And this might be a person, this could be a lifestyle, it could be a commitment made, it could be any number of things.

But the word of the Lord this morning is there are greater things for you, but they'll never be received unless you cut this out. And so this morning may be an opportunity for you to repent and to exercise faith in Jesus. Others of you may be like Hagar and Ishmael in that your whole life has been focused on trying to make God happy and do enough for God to accept you. But you've never really heard or fully believed the gospel. And the gospel is you're not saved by your works, you're saved by God's grace.

You're not saved by what you do for Jesus. You're saved by what Jesus has done for you it's not about how hard you try. It's about God's great love for you. And because he loved you so much, he sent his son into the world to live the life you couldn't live and die the death we should have died. Of a sinner hanging on a cross, separated from God. He cried out, God, why have you forsaken me? So that you would never have to say, I feel forsaken by God, but that you can say I am accepted and received and adopted and I belong in the family of God.

It's because of Jesus and Jesus alone. And if you've never had a point in your life where you have repented of your sin and you put your faith in Christ and Christ alone, if you've never had a point in your life where your salvation, your understanding of salvation, it is by grace and grace alone, then this morning it may be that the Holy Spirit is saying to you, today is your day of salvation. It's not in the well; it's in the Giver of the well. It's not in the blessing. It's not in the money.

It's not in the house. It's not in the kid. It's not in clothing; it's in Jesus. And you've been focused on the wrong thing. And he's calling you to focus on him and him alone. And if that is true of you this morning, I'm going to give you an opportunity to pray a prayer. And if you pray this prayer, I'm going to invite you to come and make that decision public by coming and presenting yourself and saying, I want to give my life to Jesus this morning. You may be, like I said earlier in the service, someone who needs to be baptized and the testimony of these people who have been baptized today, you would say, you know what?

I'm tired of delaying it. I'm tired of putting it off. I'm tired of explaining it away. I want to be faithful to Jesus because Jesus has been faithful to me. And so however the Lord calls you to respond, you can do that now as we pray