

# Weary Waiting for God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, church. Our scripture lesson this morning is taken from Genesis chapter 16 verses 1 through 16. May you please follow with me as I read.

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne 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 unto my servant, it may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai's, 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.

[ 1 : 34 ] Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her. The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur.

And he said, Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going? 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, 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.

[ 2 : 42 ] 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 Berlach-Hario. It lies between Kadesh and Bereth.

And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Abram. Please bow in prayer with me. Father, thank you this morning for the privilege we have to proclaim your word and to hear it.

Lord, you know where each one of us is, and you have ordained that we would be here this morning. And so, Lord, we ask that you would speak to each heart.

[ 3 : 45 ] Lord, we pray, Lord, that you would cause us to both hear and obey all that you would say to us. And we pray, Lord, that most of all, your name would be glorified.

It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Well, this morning we are continuing our sermon series in the book of Genesis. And I believe that those of you who have been a part of the sermon series, whether you heard all the sermons or most of the sermons, I think you would agree with me that Genesis is filled with surprises.

As we worked our way through the book of Genesis, we see surprise after surprise after surprise. As we come to Genesis 16, once again, we find a chapter filled with surprise.

You may remember that in Genesis 15, we looked at how Abram was anxious that he was not going to have a child, and God graciously met him and assured him, told him, you can count stars in the sky.

That's going to be the extent of your offspring. And the point was that you'll have so many children, your offspring would not be able to be counted. And then Abram was concerned about the promise that God gave him about land, that he would give land to this offspring.

[ 5 : 16 ] And God graciously made this unilateral, unconditional covenant with Abram, where he demonstrated to Abram that in this ritual that they would go through to make a covenant, he said, may it be to me what is the fate of these animals if I don't keep my word to you.

And God did all of this to assure Abram that the promises that he made of offspring and land to his offspring, that he was going to fulfill those promises.

And so the surprise of Genesis 16 is that we find that despite these convincing and amazing assurances that God gives to Abram, the God who cannot lie, we find that Abram is doing something in Genesis 16 that is totally contrary and contradictory to those assurances that God has given to him.

We find Abram weary waiting for God to fulfill this promise of a child. And we find him desperate to try to make sure that it happens.

And brothers and sisters, as we consider this passage this morning, I pray that we would see that Abram's experience in many ways is our own experience. Abram's experience rings true for all of God's people.

[ 6 : 48 ] Because all of God's people, at some point, if you serve God long enough, you'll find yourself in a place where you are weary of waiting for God.

And what we see in this passage is this very sobering truth that even when God, who cannot lie, makes a promise to us, we can become weary waiting for him to fulfill the promise, and we set about to try to fulfill it ourselves.

And I believe all of us know this reality to some degree or another. No doubt some of us this morning are facing this reality right now.

This reality of weariness in waiting for God to do what he has promised that he would do. Maybe there's a promise in God's word.

You're waiting for the Lord to fulfill in your life. You've waited a long time, and now you're weary. Perhaps it's not an outright promise in God's word. Perhaps it is a good and godly desire that you have in your heart.

[ 8 : 03 ] A good and godly desire that you've seen God perform for other people. And you believe that he has that for you as well.

It might be marriage. It might be the desire for a child. It might be for a better job. It might be something else that is good and godly. And yet the reality is that when God takes long, we grow weary.

And so this morning I want us to consider this passage to not just learn about Abram and how he grew weary waiting for God, but also to learn about ourselves and how we sometimes grow weary waiting for God.

For those of you who are taking notes, I've organized the sermon under three headings. And the first one is the reality of weariness. We're told in Genesis 16.3 that Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, and still he and Sarai, his wife, had no children.

This means that at this point, Abram would have been 85 years old because God called him in Genesis 12 when he was 75 years old.

[ 9 : 23 ] And so this time Sarai, his wife, would have been 65 years old. And we know from Genesis 17.17, if you jump ahead, you don't need to do it now, but you can check it on your own.

There was a ten-year difference between Abram and Sarai. We're told in Genesis 17.17 that Abram had a son when he was 100 years old and Sarai was 90 years old.

So that ten-year difference between them means that at this particular point in Genesis 16, Sarai was 65 years old.

She was 75 years old based on Abram's age at this time. Now, we don't know how old Abram was in Genesis 15, but we see that in Genesis 15, he was wary of waiting.

He was anxious, and he was crying out to God to assure him that he was indeed going to fulfill this promise of giving him offspring and giving his offspring land.

[ 10 : 33 ] And so here in chapter 16, after living ten years in the land of Canaan, he and Sarai are still childless, and what we see is not just his weariness, but we see Sarai's weariness.

And I think they're wary because clearly, although they were old, they were certainly trying to have a child. They've been trying all their life as a married couple.

And you can imagine, after God would have given him this assurance in chapter 15, they definitely were trying even harder, with even more expectation to have a child.

And so Sarai finally hits a season of unbearable weariness where she gives up. And she gives up to the point where she is willing to share her husband with another woman.

Look at what she says to Abram in verse 2. Behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go into my servant. It may be that I may obtain children by her.

[11:39] Now, we don't know exactly how Sarai was certain that she was the one who could not bear children, but that Abram, though he was old, that somehow, with some certainty, he could have children, and hence the proposal that she was putting out to him.

But what we see in this is, in this statement of Sarai, a perspective on bearing children is correct. God is the one who sovereignly grants or withholds the bearing of children, and either way, it really has nothing to do with us.

It has everything to do with the sovereign plans of God, and in the sovereign plans, if and when he chooses to grant children or to withhold children altogether.

And this is something we must all remember. It's in the sovereign hands of God. The Lord grants or withholds children in accordance with the sovereign will.

And so Sarah, in her weariness, urges Abram to take her Egyptian slave, Hagar, as a second wife. And that's what she calls her in verse 3.

[12:56] She gives her slave to Abram as a wife. Not just a one-night stands, but as a wife. Now, we may frown upon that, but in that culture at that time, this was a normal practice.

Polygamy was normal. Slavery was normal. You treated your slave as property, and so what she did with Hagar would not have been frowned upon in that day because that was a part of the culture.

And though Hagar would have been the second wife to Abram, since she was owned by Sarai, her children would have been the property of Sarai. The last sentence of verse 2 says, And Abram listened to the voice of his wife.

And that's what Phil is, brothers and sisters. That is to draw our attention to a very important point. So not only was Sarai, at this point, weary and waiting for God, but we see also that Abram, the man of faith, who earlier believed God's promise, not just for an heir, but for offspring, offspring and countable in number, he had also become weary.

This one who God made an unconditional covenant with, a unilateral covenant with him, assuring him that I will do this, I will perform this, you have nothing to do, I'm going to do this, Abram is weary.

[14:30] And so he listens to the voice of his weary wife. Brothers and sisters, one of the realities of becoming weary and waiting for God to fulfill his promises is that we don't manage weariness.

If we don't manage weariness, by renewing our faith in the Lord, renewing our trust in his promise, it can lead us to desperation. It can lead us to do things that we never imagined that we would have done.

And that's what we see on display here with Abram and Sarai. Sarai tells Abram to do what was acceptable in the culture of that day, but it was not acceptable to the Lord.

The Lord had already revealed his will for human sexuality. In Genesis 2, it's between one man and one woman. And we should be especially sobered by Abram's weariness more than Sarai's weariness because Abram was the one to whom God spoke.

He didn't speak directly to Sarai. Sarai got the report secondhand from Abram. And so the one that we should really be sobered by is the fact that Abram had God to appear to him in these explicit ways, in these ways that you just can't shake that that was God who spoke to me, God who told me to look up at the sky and the stars, God who made this covenant.

[16:07] And when I woke up, everything was burnt, and I realized that God made this covenant all by himself. That man grew weary in his faith. And that man resorted to desperation and did something that was contrary to God's revealed will.

He listened to his wife. When we consider Abram and Sarai's situation, right up front, it seems odd that God would call, first of all, an old man with an old wife.

And then after calling them at an old age, that he would wait so long to give them children. And it almost begs the question, why would God do that?

Why would God call them when they're old? Why would he promise that he's going to give them children? And considering their age, not let them have children right away. We don't know the answer specifically.

We cannot be certain because the text doesn't tell us. But I think in this account, we can get some hints. When we look at the life of Abram and Sarai, we can get some hints about why God did what he did the way that he did.

[ 17 : 26 ] I think the first reason that God did not give Abram and Sarai children right away was to humble them. God wanted to humble them. The truth is that when God called Abram and Sarai, when God promised Abram offspring, Abram was 75 and Sarai was 65.

And the reality is they could have had children. They could have had natural children. And I'm sure they would have acknowledged God's hand in it in some way, but not as much as we would see later on when Abram is 100 and Sarai is 90.

As a matter of fact, when the Lord, through the angel, announces to both Abram and Sarai that they're going to have a child later on, they both were so laughing.

At 100 and 90. But they didn't laugh when God called them the first time and said, you can have a child. So why didn't they laugh then, but they laughed later? And the reason is when Abram was 100 and Sarai was 90, they knew that was done.

That was impossible. But at this point, they thought, yeah, we could do this. Now, to test this reason, I had to do a bit of research.

[ 18 : 49 ] And so I researched to find the oldest woman on record for natural pregnancy in our times. Maybe there was somebody else who may have had a child at some other age. We don't know, but I'm just giving you what I got from oldest.org.

They got a lot of things from all kinds of oldest this and oldest that. And so I found that there's a Chinese woman named Xinjou Tian who naturally conceived and gave birth to a baby girl on the 25th of October, 2019, and she was 67.

67. So if you're 65, 66 right now, hold your legs in. I need to be careful.

You're not out of the woods yet. You never know. We may come smelling like baby powder one of these mornings. So she was 67. Sarai was 65.

And I imagine back in those days, women were stronger. And I believe women in those days brought children at a later age.

[ 20 : 05 ] I believe that bodies have degenerated over time. And so the point is that when God called Abraham and Sarai, when he told Abraham, you're going to have a child, in their minds, they thought that was doable.

And so they didn't react to it. And I believe that God was bringing them to a place. That's why he waited. He wanted to bring them to a place where they knew only God could do this.

Only God could cause. They laughed and said, can I have pleasure, the pleasure of a child at this age? And Abraham said, oh Lord, let Ishmael be the one because I don't know that it's possible for anything else to happen.

And Abraham didn't laugh when Sarai said to him, take Hagar and go into her and have children that way. Because he thought, yeah, I could do that. But God waited to give them a child because he wanted to humble them.

And the way he humbled them was by waiting to ensure that when he gave them a child, they would know that that child was a pure gift from God and not the result of their childbearing ability.

[ 21 : 36 ] I think the other reason that God waited to fulfill the promise of a child to Abraham and Sarai is that God was doing something in them between the period of the promise and the fulfillment of the promise.

God was refining them. God was testing them. God was refining them the way a refiner refines precious metal by putting it through the fire, putting it through the heat to take out the impurities. You know, it's no accident that we read that it was after 10 years of living in the land of Canaan that Abraham and Sarai remained childless.

That's what it says in verse 3. It tells us 10 years. The number 10 in Scripture is regularly used as a reference to divine testing.

And God does this in His Word. He gives us these indications, these hints, to help us understand what is really going on in a particular situation that we may come upon in Scripture.

[ 22 : 59 ] And so, for example, in Genesis 31, on two separate occasions, Jacob says to Laban, he says, you changed my wages 10 times.

You look at the account, he didn't change his wages 10 times. He changed it 2 or 3 times. But Jacob's point to Laban was, you have tried me to the limit by changing my wages as much as you did.

You've tested me to the limit. And that's why he was running away with his wives. He tested him. And so he said, you did it 10 times. 10 is the number of divine testing.

You ever wondered why God gave us 10 commandments and not 7 or 11 or 12? God gave us 10 commandments as a divine test of our obedience and love for Him.

In the New Testament, in the book of Revelation, Revelation 2.10, the Lord Jesus says to the church at Smyrna, He says, some of you will be thrown in prison and you will be tested.

[ 24 : 11 ] You will be in tribulation for how long? 10 days. He wasn't literally saying to them, count the days, after 10 days, you're going to be out of prison.

No. He's saying, you're going to be tested to the limit. Could have been 3 days. Could have been 15 days. But 10 communicates that this is divine testing that you're going through. And I can go on with other examples.

But so, what we see is, Abel and Sarah, they're in Canaan and it's almost as if, humanly speaking, the point at which they gave up after those 10 years would have been when God would have come right in and fulfilled that promise.

But they grew weary. And, humanly speaking, they grew weary and things turned in another direction.

But I'll leave the references to 10 as divine testing at that particular point. But it's a wonderful study to do on your own and just go through and look at those references to 10 being used in different situations.

[ 25 : 21 ] You'll see that it is consistently used as an indication of divine testing that God is doing something in the midst of this particular situation.

And for Abram and Sarah, he was purifying them. He was refining them. And I think for some of us, even right now, in the midst of waiting, God is testing us.

God is refining us. And the reason is that God is not just interested in doing things for us. In the process, God is interested in doing things to us and in us.

God is interested in working in us. Because at the end of the day, what God does in us is far more precious than what God does for us. Anything that God does for us in this life, brothers and sisters, is going to pass away.

But his work in us points towards eternity. waiting for us to and when we are waiting for the Lord, it is a season when we can grow in our dependence upon him and we can learn to draw near to him and we can continue to trust in him when our hearts are growing weary and they're faint.

[ 26 : 43 ] It's a wonderful opportunity. It's kind of like none of us likes to be in that situation where we are weary and we are anxious and we are just desirous that God will act and do what we are expecting him to do, what he's promised in his word or what we have in our hearts.

None of us likes to be there, but brothers and sisters, it's a wonderful opportunity for us to draw near to the Lord, to grow in our dependence on the Lord, to trust in the Lord. We have that opportunity when God waits between the promise given and the promise fulfilled.

And so I encourage you this morning, if you find yourself waiting, I pray that your waiting is not purposeless. I pray that your waiting would be purposeful and you would draw near to God and trust in dependence knowing that he will do what is good and right concerning you in his way and in his time.

But I think it's sufficient to say that Abram and Sarai failed the test. They failed the test, they became weary, they became desperate, and their weariness and their desperation led to disobedience.

And this leads me to my second point, the danger of disobedience. Look again at verses 3 to 6. 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.

[ 28 : 24 ] 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 you, 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.

Brothers, that's women. 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. Kent Hughes in his excellent commentary on Genesis insightfully points out that there are parallels between the disobedience of Adam and the disobedience of Abram.

And that's what we see in each case. It is not so much the disobedience of Adam and Eve or the disobedience of Abram and Sarai.

[ 29 : 43 ] It is really the disobedience of Adam because he is the one God commanded. And it's the disobedience of Abram because he is the one to whom God spoke.

In Genesis 3, we are told that Adam listened to the voice of his wife. And here in Genesis 16, 3, we are told that Abram listened to the voice of his wife, Sarai.

And the parallel between these two men could not be clearer. God had spoken to both of them directly and yet both men heeded the voice of their wives above the voice of God.

God has called us to love our wives unconditionally and sacrificially at all times.

that we are not called to agree with our wives at all times or to seek to please them at all times.

[ 31 : 01 ] If agreeing with our wives or pleasing our wives will result in disobeying the Lord, that we must be faithful to obey the Lord and please the Lord rather than our wives and put up with whatever nagging or issues come after that.

Brothers, we must be faithful to do it. We must be faithful to do it. I mean, think of Abram. I mean, if you see the way Sarai acted after she told him to do something and he did it, imagine how she would have acted if he didn't listen to her in the first place.

I mean, she would have had his head. She would have really made life miserable and Abram probably had experience and he said, okay, whatever you, whatever, whatever, whatever, whatever you want.

But brothers, if we don't and if we follow Adam and Abram's example by listening to our wives when their voice is contrary to God's voice, we will have similar disastrous outcomes as both of them had. they both had disastrous outcomes. Another parallel that we see between Adam and Abram is Eve, the Bible says, took the fruit and gave it to Adam and he took it and ate it.

[ 32 : 38 ] And then here we see in Genesis 16 that Sarai took Hagar and gave her to Abram and he took her and went into her.

And she conceived. And yet another parallel that we see in these two men and their lives is just as Adam and Eve did not get the outcome that they were banking on, they were hoping, they were hoping that they would be like God.

Abram and Sarai didn't get the outcome they were hoping for. Adam and Eve didn't become like God, they actually found themselves in a place separated from God, they tried to hide themselves from God, they were naked, they were ashamed, and they were soon to be evicted out of their home.

They weren't wise, they were foolish. And the same is true for Abram and Sarai. Sarai never dreamed that her formerly submissive slave would treat her with contempt.

And when you understand the condition of slavery and the power that slave owners had over slaves, it is almost unthinkable that a slave would act the way that Sarai, that Hagar acted towards Sarai.

[ 34 : 09 ] Sarai never could have conceived that that would happen once Hagar conceived. And Abram never dreamt that by listening to his wife Sarai that he would bring himself in the middle of two wives rivalry.

I mean, one was enough. Sarai was a handful, alone, and he pulls himself into this situation where these two warring wives at each other's throats.

And he never dreamed definitely that Sarai, the one who came to him with the bright idea of having this child, would turn on him and blame him for everything and say, may God judge you for what is happening to me.

But you know, Sarai was right. She was right. What was happening in the land of Canaan was Abram's fault as much as what happened in the Garden of Eden was Adam's fault. And when God showed up in the Garden, he didn't show up to Adam first. Sorry, to Eve first. He showed up to Adam first and said, Adam, what have you done? Abram had the responsibility because God spoke to him.

[ 35 : 26 ] He had the responsibility to take that thought out of his wife's mind and say, no, we're going to wait and we're going to trust God to fulfill this promise for us.

Abram was wrong to listen to his wife and not God, just as Adam was wrong to listen to his wife and not God. And let me see another failure on Abram's part in how he responded to this conflict between Sarai and Hagar.

When the conflict arose between Sarai and Hagar, rather than deal with Hagar and tell her, look, you need to change your contemptuous attitude and you need to be respectful towards my wife, my first wife, we see that Abram, he coughs out.

He takes the easy way out. He says to his wife, Sarai, look at what he says in verse 6, behold, your servant is in your power, do to her as you please. And the result is that Sarai mistreated Hagar. And she did it with Abram's approval. Abram acted cowardly by not intervening in that situation and defusing it as he could have and ought to have.

[ 36 : 50 ] And so the harsh mistreatment that Hagar received at Sarai's hand caused her to run away. It must have been hard because she was running away to an uncertain future.

It's helpful to remember as we're working our way through the book of Genesis to remember that we're not just reading something in a vacuum. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, these are books written by Moses.

And Moses wrote these books as part of his argument to the children of Israel when they were coming out of Egypt to say this is what you can be assured of that God has promised this land to us and God is going to give us this land.

All of the account about how he promised the land to Abram and his offspring and how he made the covenant that I'm going to do this. Moses was putting all this in front of them to say this is the evidence that we have that this is God's doing taking us out of Egypt into the promised land.

And it would not have been lost on them how the tables turned. See, because here in Genesis 16 what we have is we have Sarai, a Hebrew, who is harshly treating Hagar, an Egyptian.

[ 38 : 21 ] And the tables turn years later where it is the Egyptians who are harshly treating the Israelites. And what you find is in the book of Exodus there are several references to the harsh treatment of the Egyptians upon the Israelites.

Israelites. And it's the exact same term that is used to refer to them. And it's quite amazing how the tables can turn in life. That they would experience something that way, way back the mother of their clan, the mother of their group, their Hebrews, would have mistreated Hagar, who was the mother of the man who would produce the nation of Egypt.

So Sarah's game flopped because here it is. The woman she expected to have a child through runs away. And the only thing that she and Abram have is contention between them, strife between them as husband and wife.

wife. We see that an angel in verse 7, an angel of the Lord comes to Sarai as she is running away, meets her in the wilderness.

And the angel questions her and says, where have you come from and where are you going? And it's interesting how Hagar responds. Hagar doesn't fully respond to the question because she couldn't.

[ 40 : 05 ] The only thing that she could tell the angel is where she had come from and why she was running away. But she didn't say to her where she was going because she didn't know where she was going. All she knew is that she wanted to escape the harsh treatment that Sarai was inflicting upon her, but she did not know where she was going.

And sometimes we can be that oppressed and challenged in life that we just think about one aspect of the situation and not the other part where we just run to nothingness.

We run to a hopeless future. And so the angel says to her, and that's in saying, look, you're going nowhere.

What you need to do is you need to return yourself to your mistress and you need to behave. That's essentially what she said. And this is what Abram should have told Hagar from the beginning.

Behave yourself. Submit to Sarai. Stop treating her with contempt. Stop teasing her. Submit to her and be respectful and all will be well.

[ 41 : 18 ] And it seems like that's what Hagar did and it seemed like all was well at least for 14 years until we'll see later on. Ishmael grew up when he was about 14 years old and he started to tease Isaac and then eventually he was put out.

But the angel gave her good advice. Gave her advice that Abram lacked the courage to give. And we see in verse 10 that the angel also promised to multiply her offspring that it would be so great a number that you could not count the number of them.

The angel also reveals to her, this is the first baby revealing in the Bible, that you are having a boy, you're having a son. She would not have known that, but she said you're going to have a son, you're going to call his name Ishmael, which means God's hairs because the Lord has listened to your affliction.

How kind of the Lord to listen to this slave who was mistreated. The Lord had regard for her. and Sarai mistreated her with Abram's permission.

But the angel does something else. The angel in verse 12 foretells Ishmael's nature and his future.

[ 42 : 43 ] She says he will be a, he says he will be a wild donkey of a man. His hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him. he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.

The angel prophesied that Ishmael will be uncontrollable, he will be contentious, he will be hostile towards his brothers. And what the angel was saying was not just true for Ishmael himself, but also for his descendants.

Ishmael is the father of the Arabs. And later in Genesis 25, we see that Ishmael had 12 sons, and they became the heads. of the tribes of the Arabs.

And then Jacob, later we are told, he fathered 12 sons as well, and they headed up the 12 tribes of Israel. And as foretold by the angel, there has been hostility between Ishmael's sons and the sons of Israel from that time until now.

It started with the conflict right in the house, where Ishmael was teasing Isaac, and he was put out. And this remains true up to this day.

[ 44 : 01 ] There remains hostility between the Arab nations and the nation of Israel. And almost every year, like in the United States, with every change of precedent, there's a new initiative to bring peace in the Middle East.

And there are initiatives from other governments to bring peace in the Middle East. Brothers and sisters, there will be no peace in the Middle East until the Prince of Peace returns.

It will continue. It will continue until the day that the Lord returns. Should they try and do all the things humanly possible they think they can do? Yes, I support them. Go ahead and do it. But we have no optimism in that.

Because only the Prince of Peace can bring true and lasting peace. The hostilities that exist between the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Isaac, of Jacob, they are there because of the disobedience of Abram.

They are there because Abram became weary and tired and he sought to make his own way. When God had promised him on his very own existence, that he was going to fulfill his promise.

[ 45 : 18 ] But Abram got tired, got weary, he made his own way and this is one of the consequences of his disobedience, a lasting consequence. Brothers and sisters, we should be sobered by the far reaching consequences of disobedience.

Genesis 16 in many ways is a dark and discouraging chapter. we see the reality of weariness in waiting for God in the lives of Abram and Sarai.

We see how great faith can wane and how God's people can fall into disobedience. We see the darkness of enslavement of one human by another where Hagar is treated as property and put into a sexual relationship that she did not consent to.

We see the darkness of polygamy and the strife of the relationship that it brings. We see the dark, sinful, inhumane, harsh treatment meted out by Sarah to Hagar.

And we also see the consequences of Abram's disobedience. Lasting consequences leading to thousands of years of hostility between his own children.

[ 46 : 46 ] And all of these dark realities as we consider this account, they help us to see the need for grace. And this is my third and final point, the necessity of grace.

Genesis 16 has three characters and none of them is a saint. They all need grace. Abram is no saint.

He disobeys God by failing to continue to believe God's promise. He sinfully listens to his wife's faith. And he fails to lead as a man in the conflict between these two women.

But God gives Abram grace. God keeps his word to Abram concerning Ishmael. His offspring. God, even though he fathered him outside of God's will, contrary to God's will, God blessed Ishmael because he was Abram's son. And here's what I would say.

[ 47 : 51 ] This is probably the best example of what you may call a mixed blessing. You see the divine blessing of God upon Ishmael because of Abram.

God promised, God kept his word, multiple offspring, blessed in many ways, great in many ways. And yet there's this very obvious embedded aspect of sin and fallenness and that which is not of God, the hostility, the contention, the warring nature of Ishmael.

But God was gracious still to Abram. And God will see that he was gracious to Abram later by still fulfilling this promise to him of giving him a son.

And Sarai is no saint. We see this in her scheme to have a child, coercing another woman to bring that child into the world.

And we see it in a harsh treatment of Hagar. And yet God also gives Sarai grace. And some 15 years later he would give her her own child in the person of Isaac.

[ 49 : 16 ] And although Hagar is certainly a victim in this account, Hagar is no saint. Her contemptuous attitude towards her mistress was out of place.

It was wrong. When she found out that she was pregnant, she had no right to be contemptuous towards her mistress. And the Lord gave her grace.

He heard her cries, he heard her prayers in her affliction and rescued her in the wilderness and blessed her, blessed the child that she was carrying.

So Abram, Sarai, and Hagar all experienced what the psalmist says in Psalm 103 verse 10. He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities.

That's what they experienced. Because if God dealt with them according to what their sins deserve, there wouldn't be a Genesis 17. There'd be no need for it.

[ 50 : 24 ] Because he'd have brought things to an end for both Abram and Sarai. But brothers and sisters, God's grace to Abram, Sarai, and Hagar and indeed to all sinners is not like he gives some slip and just says, don't worry about it.

It isn't an erasing and removing it just out of sight and saying, you know, don't worry about it, just go on your way. No, that's not the grace that God gives to them.

It's not a don't worry about it, fix. It is so much more than that. The Apostle John, in the Gospel of John, in verse 17, tells us that grace came through Jesus Christ.

God's grace to Abraham and Sarai and Hagar back here in Genesis 16, it is a grace that came through Jesus Christ.

It is a grace that came on the basis of what God determined to do before the foundation of the world to send his son into the world to be a sacrifice for sin and for sinners.

[ 51 : 54 ] And they got it even before Jesus Christ actually paid that price, that sacrifice on the cross.

And the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 3 explains how that is possible. It's not going to be projected for you, but let me just go ahead and read it. I actually just want to get to the end of it, but I need to start at verse 21.

This is how grace came to sinners like Abram, Sarai, and Hagar before Christ came. Paul writes, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.

Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, is for all who believe, there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation, and that word propitiation means to turn away wrath.

It means to please or to satisfy God. Jesus turned away wrath in his death, and so what Paul says is that God put him forward.

[ 53 : 13 ] God turned away his own wrath through his own son, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins. That's what he did with Abram, with Sarai, and with Hagar.

He passed over their former sins. And he says this in verse 26, it was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

And this, brothers and sisters, is how it is possible through the death of Jesus, who satisfied the penalty of sin, that God is able to maintain his justice and his righteousness when he forgives sinners because Christ paid the price.

Jesus was the lamb slain before the foundation of the world. That was as good as done. That was, there was no possibility of that changing. And so even as God was giving grace to Abram and Sarai and Hagar, it was on the basis of what Christ would do when he would go to the cross.

[ 54 : 40 ] And so that grace was bought in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And God was able at the same time both to maintain his justice that those sins were paid for by Christ, and he was able at the same time to show his mercy to sinners.

that's the grace that they received. That's the grace they needed. And brothers and sisters, it's the grace we need. If our story, all of our stories, was to be written in a very similar way to this aspect of Abram and Sarai and Hagar's story, all of us would see, maybe not in the exact same way, but we would see ways where we just need grace, where we need forgiveness, where we need help, where we need Jesus.

And thank God for that. Because that is our only way, brothers and sisters, that is our only hope before God, that Jesus comes, and in his coming, he brings grace to hopeless sinners like us, who are no better than Abram, no better than Sarai, no better than Hagar, all of us having our sins and greatly in need of grace.

And so, whatever our circumstances are this morning, whether we have grown weary in waiting, whether we have disobeyed like Abram and Sarai, whether we have sinfully responded to the treatment of others the way Hagar did, whatever the circumstance, the grace of God is available to us this morning.

And the grace of God is sufficient. I read a quote a few weeks ago, it's actually in this month's table talk in the very first opening article, and it basically says this, there's more grace in God than there is sin in us.

[ 57 : 09 ] There's more grace in God than there is more sin in all of us put together. And that's the grace that we can draw from, we can run to, we can fall on as we sang about this morning.

If you're here this morning and you don't know Jesus Christ, that grace is available to you. Jesus says, come, he says, come to me, all who are weary, heavy laden, I will give you rest.

Give you rest in your soul. And he makes this promise, he says, all who come to me, I will turn none away. I will never turn you away. Doesn't matter what happens.

We sang it this morning, he will hold us fast. Doesn't matter what happens, he holds us. He holds us by his grace, his amazing grace, that we all desperately need.

not just in salvation, but in perseverance, and in preservation, we need his grace.

[ 58 : 21 ] We finish to the end. And so if you're here this morning, you don't know Christ, turn to Jesus. Do it right now. Trust in him. Turn from your sin, and you will find that he will abundantly pardon.

I pray you do that this morning. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.