

# Trusting God's Providence

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. Genesis chapter 24. Isaac and Rebekah.! Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years.

! And the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.! And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had. Put your hand under my thigh, that I may make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred and take a wife for my son Isaac.

The servant said to him, perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came? Abraham said to him, see to it that you do not take my son back there.

The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me, to your offspring I will give this land.

He will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine, only you must not take my son back there.

[ 1 : 24 ] So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter. Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master.

And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water.

And he said, O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.

Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the young woman to whom I shall say, Please, let down your jar that I may drink, and who shall say, Drink, and I will water your camels.

Let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master.

[ 2 : 37 ] Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder.

The young woman was very attractive in appearance, a maiden whom no man had known. She went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up. Then the servant ran to meet her and said, Please, give me a little water to drink from your jar.

She said, Drink, my lord. And she quickly let down her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, I will draw water for your camels also until they have finished drinking.

So she quickly emptied her jar into the trowel and ran again to the well to draw water, and she drew for all his camels. The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the lord had prospered his journey or not.

When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half shekel and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels and said, Please, tell me whose daughter you are.

[ 3 : 49 ] Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night? She said to him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor. She added, We have plenty of both straw and fodder and room to spend the night.

The man bowed his head and worshipped the lord and said, Blessed be the lord, the god of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master.

As for me, the lord has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen. Then the young woman ran and told her mother's household about these things.

Rebecca had a brother whose name was Laban. Laban ran out toward the man to the spring. As soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms and heard the words of Rebecca, his sister, thus the man spoke to me.

He went to the man. And behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. He said, Come in, O blessed of the lord. Why do you stand outside?

[ 4 : 57 ] For I have prepared the house and a place for the camels. So the man came to the house and unharnessed the camels and gave straw and fodder to the camels. And there was water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him.

Then food was set before him to eat. But he said, I will not eat until I have said what I have to say. He said, Speak on. So he said, I am Abraham's servant.

The lord has greatly blessed my master and he has become great. He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male servants and female servants, camels and donkeys.

And Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master when she was old. And to him he has given all that he has. My master made me swear saying, You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites in whose land I dwell.

But you shall go to my father's house and to my clan and take a wife for my son. I said to my master, Perhaps the woman will not follow me. But he said, The lord before whom I have walked will send his angel with you and prosper your way.

[ 6 : 11 ] You shall take a wife for my son from my clan and from my father's house. Then you will be free from my oath when you come to my clan. And if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.

I came today to the spring and said, O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, If now you are prospering the way that I go, behold, I am standing by the spring of water.

Let the virgin who comes out to draw water to whom I shall say, Please give me a little water from your jar to drink. And who will say to me, Drink and I will draw for your camels also.

Let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master's son. Before I had finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebecca came out with her water jar on her shoulder.

And she went down to the spring and drew water. I said to her, Please let me drink. She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder and said, Drink and I will give your camels drink also.

[ 7 : 11 ] So I drank and she gave the camel's drink also. Then I asked her, Whose daughter are you? She said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.

So I put the ring on her nose and the bracelets on her arms. Then I bowed my head and worshipped the Lord and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son.

Now then, if you are going to show steadfast love and faithfulness to my master, tell me. And if not, tell me that I may turn to the right hand or to the left. Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing has come from the Lord.

We cannot speak to you, bad or good. Behold, Rebecca is before you. Take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken.

When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the earth before the Lord. And the servant brought out jewelry of silver and of gold and garments and gave them to Rebecca.

[ 8 : 23 ] He also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments. And he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there.

When they arose in the morning, he said, Send me away to my master. Her brother and her mother said, Let the young woman remain with us a while, at least ten days. After that, she may go.

But he said to them, Do not delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way. Send me away, that I may go to my master. So they said, Let us call the young woman and ask her.

And they called Rebecca and said to her, Will you go with this man? She said, I will go. So they sent away Rebecca, their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

And they blessed Rebecca and said to her, Oh sister, may you become thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate him.

[ 9 : 24 ] Then Rebecca and her young women arose and rode on the camels and followed the man. Thus the servant took Rebecca and went his way. Now Isaac had returned from Berlaharoi and was dwelling in the Nejeb.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening. And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, there were camels coming. And Rebecca lifted up her eyes.

And when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel and said to the servant, Who is that man walking in the field to meet us? The servant said, It is my master.

So she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah, his mother, and took Rebecca, and she became his wife, and he loved her.

So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. Thank you very much, Demetria.

[ 10 : 33 ] Have you ever wondered why your life happens to be what it is? For example, why did you happen to be born in the family you were born into, in the country you were born into?

Why did you happen to go to particular schools, pursue a particular job or career, marry a particular person, and the list goes on.

The single answer to all of these questions and similar ones is two words.

God's providence. God's providence is the answer to why our lives are the way they actually are.

with all their varied circumstances, with all their perplexities and complexities, the reason our lives are what they are is because of the providence of God.

[ 11 : 49 ] And if you aren't clear about what the providence of God is or unsure about what the providence of God is, in the providence of God, we have come to a section of the book of Genesis that addresses the providence of God.

And my prayer for us this morning is that we will grow in our understanding of the providence of God, but not only grow in the providence and understand the providence of God, that we would grow in trusting the providence of God.

It's one thing to understand the providence of God, it's a completely different thing to trust the providence of God in our lives.

And here's one of the realities. Humanly speaking, and I think this is true, it doesn't matter who the person is, you can think of the most powerful person in the world, the richest person in the world, if given a chance, all of us in our human wisdom would change some aspect of our lives if we could change it.

Elon Musk, the wealthiest person in the world, I think, at the moment, if he had the opportunity to change some things in his life, he would. And yet, our lives are what they are because of the wise providence of a good God.

[ 13 : 22 ] and I pray this morning that we will all either come to trust this or grow in our trust of it.

And so let's pause and look to the Lord in prayer and ask for his help this morning. Father, we are so grateful that we're able to gather in this place and to lift our voices in song and to pray to you.

and now, Lord, to have you to speak to us from your word. Father, we pray that you would do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, that you would open our hearts and minds, that you would give us ears to hear and hearts to understand and to respond to all that you say to us.

Lord, help us to grow in our understanding and our conviction that our lives are what they are, ultimately because of a good and wise and providential God who works all things in accordance with the counsel of his will.

So, Father, I pray this morning that you would meet us and you would speak to our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen. I believe it would be helpful before we get into the text to define what God's providence actually is and I'm going to depend on Wayne Grudem this morning to help us with that definition.

[ 15 : 04 ] I'm using his definition out of his systematic theology book and here's how Dr. Grudem defines God's providence.

God's providence means that God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he one, keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them, two, cooperates with created things and every action directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do and three, directs them to fulfill his purposes.

And that's a mouthful but it simply says that God did not just create everything and everyone and just leave us to ourselves and leave us the chance to exist and to do whatever we felt like doing independent of him.

Providence tells us that God is involved in his creation in every aspect and every detail directing them to fulfill his purpose.

And again this speaks about created things and also speaks about human beings. In the case of human beings God acts providentially in the actions of human beings in such a way that he can never be charged with sin and that we can never be relieved of our responsibility.

[ 16 : 47 ] And both of those things are true. That God acts in the affairs of people in such a way that he can never be charged with sin and we can never be relieved of our responsibility.

responsibility. And as we consider Genesis 24 this morning I think this will become clearer if it is not. Now it's important to note that God's providence and God's sovereignty are not the same.

God's sovereignty is his unfettered right and power to do whatever he chooses to do without reference to anyone or anything. That is his sovereign right.

He has no one to consult. He does as he pleases because he is the sovereign Lord creator of the universe creator of everything and everyone.

Nebuchadnezzar expresses the sovereignty of God in a very profound way in Daniel chapter 4 when he comes to his senses after the Lord had judged him for seven years and made him eat grass like an oxen.

[ 18 : 10 ] This is what Nebuchadnezzar says when he comes to his senses in Daniel chapter 4 verses 34 to 35. At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted my eyes to heaven and my reason returned to me and I blessed the most high and praised and honored him who lives forever.

For his dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing and he does according to his will among the hosts of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

And none can stay his hand or say to him what have you done? So God's sovereignty is his right to do as he pleases with everyone and everything because he is the creator and God's providence is the way he brings about his purposes that he sovereignly chooses to bring about.

So God makes a sovereign choice. He decides what he's going to do and then providence has to do with how that actually works out, how it actually is fulfilled.

How God weaves into the realities of human choices and actions and he brings his purposes to pass.

[ 19 : 42 ] It's the most beautiful thing to see even though we may not fully understand all the ins and outs of it. God. And so we come this morning in the providence of God to Genesis 24.

Now as you have already noticed Genesis 24 is a long chapter. It is actually the longest chapter in the book of Genesis. But really it is about one thing.

It is about the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca. Rebecca. But Moses writes this account of the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca in a particular way to communicate a particular point.

He wants, and remember again, he is writing this to the children of Israel as they are coming out of Egypt. They are in the wilderness. They are going into the promised land and Moses is writing this book and the other four books of Moses, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and he is writing to convince them that God is leading them.

He is writing to convince them that in the same way that God has providentially led his people, people, those who went before them, the way he led Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, that God is now providentially leading them into the promised land.

[ 21 : 27 ] Moses wants them to see this. He wants them to see that God was at work in bringing them to the place that he brought them to.

And so he tells this account of the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca in a particular way that we're able to see the providence of God at work.

Moses wanted them to see it, and then the Lord also wants us to see it. And the whole reason behind it is so that they and we can trust God's providence.

He wanted them to make the connection and say, the same way God led them, he's leading you, trust him, as he's leading you. Trust his providence in your life, bringing his purposes to pass.

God led his people, and he continues to lead his people both corporately and individually. And when we believe this, it brings great comfort to us, no matter what we see going on in the world, no matter what we see going on in our lives, if we can lay a hold of the truth that our lives are what they are because of a wise and a good God who's providentially at work bringing his purposes to pass.

[ 22 : 59 ] And so this morning I've structured the sermon around three points. the first, Rebecca's trust in God's providence. The second, Isaac's trust in God's providence.

And since the third point is not as obvious in the text, I'll wait to announce the third point after we've worked through the first two. So let's consider the first point, Rebecca's trust in God's providence.

Last week I mentioned that Genesis 23 marked the beginning of a transition, a transition from Abraham to Isaac.

We saw Sarah died and God fulfilled this very important promise to Abraham in a very tangible way, gave him this large piece of real estate in Canaan, the field of Machpelah.

And here in Genesis 24 we see Abraham in verse 1, we're told he is old and well advanced in age. And no doubt Abraham is thinking about his own mortality.

[ 24 : 07 ] Sarah has died. Sarah is younger than him. And he is thinking about the next generation. He's thinking about the succession of the covenant because remember the promise was to him and to his offspring.

And so he decides that he is going to secure a wife for his son Isaac. That's the way the covenant is going to continue.

There's going to be offspring beyond Isaac. And so he calls his most trusted servant and he entrusts this solemn task of getting a wife for his son Isaac.

And he calls him to swear in a very solemn way in the dark time to get into why he had him to swear by putting his hand under the thigh. But that's the way they swore in those days.

And if you're interested, you can research it. You can talk after church and I'll share with you why they swore in that particular way. But Abraham is concerned and he doesn't just say to the servant, go and get my son a wife.

[ 25 : 17 ] But he says, I want you to get him a wife. Don't get him one from among the Canaanites because he knew those were not his people. And they had a very different destiny. But remember that going back to Genesis chapter 9.

And Abraham is sure that God is going to provide a wife for his son Isaac. You'd remember back in Genesis 22 how news came to Abraham that his son Nahor had a number of sons.

And one of them actually had a daughter, Bethuel had a daughter by the name of Rebecca. So Abraham is pretty confident that among the many sons that his brothers had, there's one who could be an eligible wife for his son, Isaac.

And so the servant is committed to doing this, but he's saying, but suppose this woman doesn't want to come back to Canaan. Suppose she wants to say that, should I take your son to Canaan?

And Abraham says, no, you must not do that. And I think it's important to see why Abraham objected to the proposal or the possibility of taking Isaac back to the land of Nahor.

[ 26 : 42 ] Look at Genesis 24 verses 6 to 8. Abraham said to him, see to it that you do not take my son back there. the Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred and who spoke to me and swore to me, to your offspring I will give this land.

He will send his angel before you and you shall take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman is not willing to follow, then you will be free from this oath of mine.

Only you must not take my son back there. So Abraham is certain he's going to find a wife, but the reason he doesn't want Isaac to go back there is because he believes the promise.

He believes what God said to him. He said, God said, he's going to give us this land, and Isaac is the one who is going to stand in my stead when I'm off the scene.

And so the servant sets about on this solemn task. He puts together a huge caravan, ten camels, a lot of gifts, a lot of other possessions, and they set about and they go to Abraham's homeland of Nahor.

[ 28 : 03 ] And he wisely knows where the women, the young women, would be gathering. They'd be gathering at the well because that is what the women did in that culture.

They went to the well at a particular time to gather water. had the camels to lay down and he prays this prayer. He says, Lord, let the woman who I asked to give me a drink, let her not only give me a drink, but let her also offer to give water to my camels.

And what is interesting is in verse 15, if you look at verse 15, it says, before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder.

It's important to see what's going on in this particular verse. Before he was finished praying, before he had completed saying all that he was saying to God, we're told, Rebekah came out with her water jar on her shoulder.

And in this, we're able to see the providence of God. We're able to see that Rebekah did not come in response to the servant's prayer. He was still praying.

[ 29 : 35 ] She had already left home, really, before he began to pray. God so orchestrated it providentially that Rebekah would be coming to him even as he is praying to the Lord.

And so this moment at the well is all a part of God's providence. And I think if we were to interview Rebekah, if that were possible, and say, hey, why did you go to the well at that particular time?

She'd say, well, I always go to the well. I decided to go to the well. But again, it was because of the providence of God, God cooperating with human actions to bring about this particular encounter.

And so the servant, when he saw Rebekah, we're told in verse 17, he runs up to her, asks her for a drink of water, and she gives him the drink of water, and then she also says to him, and I'll water your camels as well.

Now, this was a pretty major undertaking that this young lady decided to take on. And it's very clear that the servant as well, he wasn't just interested in something superficial, laid something pretty burdensome on this young lady who would possibly be the one who was going to be the wife of Isaac.

[ 31 : 16 ] We're told by biblical historians that camels typically drank 25 gallons of water. That's the amount of water they drank.

There were ten of them, and we're also told that ancient water jars were about three gallons, they held about three gallons of water. And she said that she was going to water, she was going to give water to all of those camels.

camels. And the way the well was situated in those days, the well, you had to go down the well by some steps.

It was like a spring, and they had to kind of quarry it out, and you would go down to the well. And so she would go up and down that well, bringing three gallons of water per time to give to those camels.

And it's estimated that she would have made between 80 to 100 trips down into that well, up and down that well. Something that they estimate would have taken her between one and a half to two hours in the heat of the afternoon.

[ 32 : 29 ] And I think in this as well, we're able to see the providence of God. Why would this young lady take on such an unusual responsibility beyond being kind to this man and giving him water?

Why would she take on this task of watering the camels as well? And I think if we could interview her and we would ask her, why did you do that? She said, because I wanted to.

She wouldn't have any sense that she was forced to do it, but it was all in accordance with God's providence in keeping with the circumstances that this servant was saying that he would recognize that this is the one whom the Lord had appointed.

But even at this point, the servant wasn't sure. He wasn't sure that she was the one because she also had to be related to Abraham because he wanted not just a woman from Nahor, but he wanted someone related to his family.

Look at verse 21. It says, the man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the Lord had prospered his journey or not. So he's watching her as she's going up and down this well, bringing water out for these camels, and he's wondering, has God prospered my journey?

[ 33 : 57 ] And when she is finished, he gives her this nose ring, he gives her these bracelets, and she runs home and tells her family what has happened, and no doubt all she's thinking about is he has rewarded her for her kind act of giving him water and also giving his camels water.

At this point, he's not told her anything about looking for a wife for Isaac. All he simply said is, you know, would you give me a drink? And he, well, I ran ahead of myself.

He also asked her who she was. before she runs off, he asked her who she was, and she tells him that she is Bethuel's daughter, and obviously Abraham had told his servant about his family back then.

So look at verses 26 and 27. In response to what she says, the man bowed his head, worshipped the Lord, and said, blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love, and his faithfulness toward my master.

As for me, the Lord has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsman. He recognizes that God has orchestrated and guided his steps that he would have this encounter with Rebecca.

[ 35 : 34 ] and he is believing that this is the one whom God has appointed to be Isaac's wife. But he's not home free yet because he doesn't know whether she is going to be willing to go back to Canaan with him.

And so she runs home and she tells the family, and we get introduced to her brother Laban, and we'll see more of him as we walk our way through Genesis.

And one of the first things we see about Laban is Laban was not a straight-up guy. Laban, one, was a greedy man. We'll see this how he dealt with Jacob later on.

But the thing that attracted Laban to this man, this stranger who was a servant of Abraham, was no doubt the wealth that he had. The gold jewelry that he had given to Rebecca, Rebecca's description of this man, the ten camels he had, the other servants he had with him, all the possessions that he had, and Laban runs to him and he says, hey, come to the house, we have a room prepared for you, we'll take care of you, and Laban graciously invites this man home, prepares this big meal for him, and he says to him, I can't eat until I tell you what I have on my mind, and they allow him to speak, and he then rehearses this whole long story starting from the time that Abraham commissioned him up to what had happened with Rebecca, and then he ends by saying this to them in verse 49, now then, if you are going to show steadfast love and faithfulness to my master, tell me, if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left, and after they had heard all that they heard,

Laban and Bethuel, they respond to him with these words in Genesis 50 and 51, then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, the thing has come from the Lord, we cannot speak to you, bad or good, Rebekah is before you, take her and go and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken.

[ 38 : 05 ] What did they mean by the thing is from the Lord, the thing has come from the Lord? What they meant by that was they were acknowledging this is God's providence. All that you have said, we're able to see God's hand in it and we can add nothing to it, we can take nothing away from it, this is the Lord, take Rebekah and go.

And so the servant gives more gifts, gives Rebekah more gifts, gives gifts to Laban, gives gifts to Milca. They eat and then the next morning they attempt to leave and Laban and Milca say, no, we need ten days with her.

And the servant says, please don't delay me, let me go about my business. And so there's a dispute between them. And the way they decide to settle it is they say, okay, let's ask Rebekah what she thinks and what she wants.

And Rebekah responds with three words, I will go. And what is Rebekah doing?

Rebekah is, she knew the whole story as well. and she recognizes God's providential hand in all of these dealings and so Rebekah agrees with God's providence when she says, I will go.

[ 39 : 35 ] She's deciding to leave the familiarity of her family and she's going to make this journey to this foreign land to marry this cousin of hers who she's never seen because she is trusting in the providence of God that she's experienced in the last 24 hours.

We also see God's providential hand at work in bringing Rebekah to be Isaac's wife in the blessing that her family bestow upon her when she's about to leave.

In verse 60 they say, Our sister, may you become thousands of ten thousands and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate them.

And you may recall that this blessing is very similar to the blessing that Isaac received in Genesis 22 when the Lord blessed him and said very similar words concerning him.

And so this was God's providential hand in dealing with Rebekah. Rebekah recognizes it and she submits to that and she decides that she's going to go on this journey and she's going to marry Isaac.

[ 41 : 02 ] She's going to become his wife. That's the first point. The second point, which is shorter than the first one, is Isaac's trust in God's providence.

When the servant returned with Rebekah, the encounter between her and Isaac is captured in verses 62 to 67.

Look at these verses again. Now Isaac had returned from Bealaharoi and was dwelling in the Negev.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening and he lifted up his eyes and saw and behold there were camels coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel and said to the servant, who is that man walking in the field to meet us?

The servant said, it is my master. So she took her veil and covered herself and the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

[ 42 : 17 ] And Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah, his mother, and took Rebekah and she became his wife and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted from his mother's death.

Now we're told that Isaac was in the field towards the evening. He's meditating, not sure what he's doing, but he happens to be out at the same time that Rebekah is returning.

There were no cell phones where the servant would call him and say, hey, I'm about to arrive, you know, I have your wife, none of that. He just happens to be there.

How is that? It's the providence of God. It's the providence of God that he lifts up his eyes and she lifts up her eyes and they see one another.

And when she sees them, she takes the veil and she puts it over her face, symbolic of this is a bride who is going to meet her husband.

[ 43 : 18 ] And that's orchestrated in the providence of God that Isaac just happens to be in the field meditating when the servant happens to come with his wife.

Now, we can be sure that Abraham had told Isaac that he was going to get a wife for him. We can be sure that Abraham was raising Isaac in the ways of the Lord and teaching him about the covenant, about the promises, of God, that he was going to be the one through whom this covenant was going to continue, that he was going to be the one who was going to inherit he and his offspring, the land of Canaan.

And we see Isaac's trust in God's providence in these two verses. It's easy to overlook this particular verse, but look at verse 66.

it says, the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. And this is a long conversation. This was, I mean, you can see how long the chapter was, and he rehearsed all of this, all the things about encountering Rebecca, all the things about being in the house, everything that happened up to this particular point.

He recounts it for Isaac. Isaac. And what does Isaac do? Isaac submits to the providence of God.

[ 44 : 57 ] Isaac trusts God's providence by taking Rebecca to be his wife. wife. And when you think about what Isaac has done in taking Rebecca to be his wife, remember, he could have said no.

He had the choice of saying no. I don't want this woman to be my wife. But he trusted God's providence.

And he took her. And the Bible tells in verse 67 that he loved her. This is the first expression of marital love that we find in scripture.

That Isaac loved Rebecca. Loved this woman who he did not so much go out and select, but he accepted based on all that had transpired that this was God's appointment for him.

That this was the one whom God had chosen to be his wife. And we can see the joy that she brought into his life. That he had been grieving his mother's passing for three years.

[ 46 : 09 ] And it was only when Rebecca became his wife, we're told that he was comforted from his mother's death.

God's providence in God's purposes and God's providence in this marriage between Rebecca and Isaac.

Rebecca now is the matriarch in Israel, soon to be Israel, and Isaac is the heir in waiting to the covenant.

But for Isaac, recognizing God's providence really didn't begin with his marriage to Rebecca. You remember back in Genesis 22, Isaac had a far more vivid encounter in understanding the providence of God.

His father was about to slaughter him and offer him as a burnt offering. He was a young teenager and God in that moment stopped him, intervened, and had a ram that was caught in a thicket of bushes to be the substitute for Isaac.

[ 47 : 38 ] Providentially that lamb was there and Isaac was spared. That was God's providence as well. That right at the moment when he was going to slaughter his son, there is this ram that's caught in the thicket.

And that was a far more vivid memory in the mind of Isaac than this particular situation that he is experiencing with his wife, Rebecca.

So Isaac was no doubt one who had come to trust in the providence of God by the experiences that he had. And so we see that both Rebecca and Isaac came to trust God's providence in bringing them together as husband and wife.

And now I come to the third and final point, which as I indicated is not obvious in the text, but it is a very clear implication in the text.

It's an implication of the text. And it is this, our trust in God's providence. And the question this morning for us is, do you trust in God's providence?

[ 48 : 57 ] Or perhaps, more fundamentally, do you believe in God's providence? Or do you believe that life is ultimately about the decisions we make?

And life is about chance and happenstance and whim and luck? What do we believe?

do we believe in God's providence? Do we believe that God is in charge of everything and everyone working out his purposes in the world, even when we aren't able to fully understand how he is doing all of that?

Brothers and sisters, we need to believe in God's providence because it is clearly taught in scripture, not just in Genesis 24, it is throughout all of scripture. And so we need to believe it even where we may not fully understand it.

Some aspects of God's providence are beyond our ability to grasp and fully understand. It's hard for us to understand sometimes how does God's providence and our choices, how do they intersect?

[ 50 : 23 ] Both are realities, how do they work together? again, if we were able to interview Rebecca and we would ask her questions, why did you go to the well at that time?

Why did you take on watering those ten camels? Why did you make this decision to come to this foreign country, take this long journey to marry this cousin of yours who you had never seen?

She would have said, I wanted to do so, I decided to do so. but yet we're able to see the providential hand of God in all of those things. She made true choices, but God was providentially at work in all of those choices, bringing to pass his purpose to secure a wife for Isaac.

Bringing to pass his purpose that she would be one of the matriarchs of Israel. And similarly, if we were to interview Isaac and ask him, why did you take this woman, Rebecca, to be your wife?

And he would have acknowledged, I saw God's hand in it, but it was my decision as well to accept her as my wife.

[ 51 : 43 ] One of the common mistakes that we make is that we tend to assess God's will in our lives by the absence or the presence of trials and difficulties.

If life is wonderful, we tend to think, that must be God's will. If life is hard and difficult and broken and dysfunctional, we say, that cannot be God's will.

If I had a dollar for every time I've met a couple experiencing problems in marriage who will say, this wasn't God's will for us, I'd be wealthy.

And that's because they measure God's will in their marriage based on the absence of the presence of conflict.

And, brothers and sisters, that is not the way we are to assess God's will in our lives. As a matter of fact, when you think of Rebecca and Isaac, there is no other marriage in the Bible that is explicitly ordained of God as this one, providentially bringing them together in this particular way.

[ 53 : 05 ] And, you know, when we get a little further on in the book of Genesis, they have a dysfunctional marriage. They are playing favorites between their two sons, and Rebecca gets to the point where she so disregards her husband, Isaac, that she schemes with her son, Jacob, to deceive her husband, this one who God gave for, this one who God brought together.

And yet, that was the providence of God. That was God's wise providence, still bringing them together and had nothing to do, the problems they were facing, the dysfunction they were facing, had nothing to do with whether or not that was God's providential will for them.

It was. And, brothers and sisters, I say this this morning, let us not assess our lives based on our eyes and our own sight.

We assess it based on a belief in a providential God who doesn't leave his creatures and his creation to themselves, but he works with them and he works in the midst of their choices and in the midst of their actions.

William Cooper is a prolific hymn writer from the 1700s and he wrote a hymn titled God Moves in a mysterious way.

[ 54 : 37 ] I want you to listen to three of the last verses of the hymn. He writes and he gives counsel and this is counsel for us.

We sing this but we need to take the counsel to heart. He writes judge not the Lord by feeble sense but trust him for his grace.

Behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face. That's verse 4. Verse 5 His purposes will ripen fast unfolding every hour.

The bud may have a bitter taste but sweet will be the flower. Then he concludes the hymn with these words.

Blind unbelief is short of air and scan is work in vain. God is his own interpreter. He will make it plain.

[ 55 : 42 ] Brothers and sisters let us not scan our lives and try to say this is God or that is not God. Let us look to God. The all-wise providential God who works out his purposes in the lives of his creation.

The one who works all things according to the counsel of his will. All things without exception. And it matters not what our lives will look like on the surface.

What matters is that there is a providential God who is at work in all things and he's bringing all of his purposes to pass in our lives. Whether we understand that or not, that is what he's doing.

And if we're trying to scan our lives and figure things out, as Cooper says, that's blind unbelief. And he says, and you're sure to err. you're sure to take some circumstance in your life, some development in your life, and say, God is not in this, because it's brought me pain, it's brought me this, it's brought me that, it's brought me the other.

No, God is still at work in the midst of all of that, because he is a providential God who does not leave his creatures to themselves.

[ 57 : 03 ] others. And so I encourage us this morning as we think about whatever we think about, whether it is the family you have been born into, whether it is the school or the university that you happen to be in, whether it is the job or the career that you have, whether it is the marriage that you are in, the circumstances or the season of life that you may find yourself in, trust God's good providence in your life.

Trust him. it's not always a pretty sight.

It's not always a bed of roses, not always comfortable, but it's from, it's all from a good and a wise God whose ways are beyond finding out, whose path we cannot see.

as we may desire to see. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross was a result of God's sovereign will he wielded before the foundation of the world.

But how it came about, how it came to be, through the hands of Pilate, through the hands of the Jews, through the hands of the Romans, that was the providential, dealings of God, working it all out.

[ 58 : 36 ] Are they responsible for what they did? Yes, they are. They're responsible for their sin. Pilate is responsible, the Jews are responsible, the Romans are responsible, but it was a providential God who was causing his son to be the substitute for sinners like you and me.

And if we were present at the scene of the crucifixion, none of that would have been evident to our eyes. The whole thing would have just been one grotesque sight.

But there was a wise and good and providential God who was at work in the midst of all of that.

And brothers and sisters, there is mystery in all of that. There's mystery in the providence of God. But God doesn't call us to comprehend it. God doesn't call us to understand it.

He calls us to believe it and to trust it. And sometimes we are going to be finding ourselves being called upon to believe it and to trust it with tears in our eyes.

[ 59 : 54 ] And a broken and a heavy heart. But what's the other prospect? Do you really rather be in a circumstance where you are left to yourself?

You are left to your own choices and your own actions and God is not involved in them and you'll have the outcome that you have based on what you do and what you decide.

Do you think that's a better option? I don't think it is. I don't think it is. We are broken people if we live in a broken world. And God has never promised us on this side of eternity that all will be well.

He has not promised us that. But he has promised us that there's coming a day when he will return and he will usher in a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

And then he will make all things right. But until then, let us take our lives, our broken, dysfunctional lives, circumstances, whatever it may be, the doubts and everything else that we may have, and let us hold them and let us remind ourselves that though I don't understand this, though this may be painful, though this may be difficult, Lord, I trust you that you are the providential God working in all things, bringing your purposes to pass.

[ 61 : 23 ] And brothers and sisters, as hard as that might be, if we could embrace that, if we could believe that, it will bring great comfort to our hearts. It will bring great stability in our lives.

We can trust them as they are. They're not haphazard, even though they seem that they are. They are providential from a good and from a wise and an eternal God.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your providence in all things.

we thank you, Lord, that you are at work with all of your creation and your creatures. And although there may be things we don't understand, would you help us, Lord, to trust that you are indeed at work.

Let me pray for those of us this morning who may find these words hard to receive because of difficulties they face in some aspect of their life or doubts they may have.

[ 62 : 49 ] Would you join the head of them, Lord? Would you bring perspective and would you fill their hearts with faith, believing that there are no exception, that you are at work for your purposes to pass in all things.

But work in our hearts in this way, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Sign for closing, so.