

## Midweek Meditation, June 17, 2020

### Scripture 12:10-20

In the last several weeks, we have been journeying with Abram, the father of our faith. We have witnessed Abram's beginnings, in Ur, and we traveled with Abram, his nephew Lot, his wife Sarah and his father Terah. They left Ur and went along the Euphrates River to a place called Haran. Then, after the death of his father, we shared Abram's call from God to go that land of Canaan. We witnessed God's promise in Shechem and Bethel, that the land of Canaan would be the inheritance of Abram's offspring. And we learned that we are among those offspring.

We left the story last week as Abram was heading south to the region of Negev. We pick up the story of Abram, Sarah, Lot and all those with them dwelling in the land of Negev. The passage we have shared, as our lesson today, tells us that Abram and his people during that time encountered a devastating famine. As a response to that famine, Abram makes the decision to take all the people of his household and head to Egypt where the shores of the Nile provide an abundance of food that was much needed to sustain Abram's people, God's chosen people.

So, the people and livestock that were a part of Abram's community packed up and headed to Egypt. As they approached Egypt, Abram said to Sarah, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, "This is his wife." Then they will kill me but let you live." Then Abram asked Sarah to say to the Egyptians that she was Abram's sister, so that Abram would be treated well for Sarah's sake, and Abram's life would be spared because of Sarah. And as we know, Abram was right about how the Pharaoh would react to Sarah's beauty.

Now here is a passage that leaves us scratching our heads a little bit. Abram, the father of our faith, assumes a deceptive identity, and offers his wife up to another in order to protect himself from being mistreated, or even killed by Pharaoh. Now I am not going to try to justify this story, or explain why a story such as this glorifies God.

**What we do know is that the famine created a desperate situation for Abram's people, and that Abram thought that their only option was to go to Egypt so that they had enough food to eat and water to drink. I guess that maybe Abram reveals his human weakness by responding to a desperate situation by making a desperate decision in order to try to preserve his community.**

**What were his choices. They could stay in Negev and allow his people to starve to death. Or, they could go to Egypt and Abram could be completely honest about his identity and be killed because of Pharaoh's lust for his wife. Or, Abram could tell Pharaoh that he was Sarah's brother in order to preserve God's chosen people and their pursuit of the promised land. Perhaps this was the best bad option that they had.**

**What I take away from this passage is that God accepted Abram when he was afraid. God accepted the imperfection of Abram's ability to lead this fledgling nation. God took what looks like, to us, a sinful decision by Abram and transformed the imperfection of his decision into abundance. We know that plagues in Egypt caused Pharaoh to fear the God of Abram and send Abram away with Sarah and all the people that came to Egypt with Abram. And when they were sent away to the place where they came from, they had more people and property and livestock than they did when they crossed the border into Egypt.**

**I choose to be amazed that God would take the imperfection of what his servant offered up, and use it to further the holy purpose of God, rather than spending a lot of time wondering if the actions of Abram and his people were fully righteous. History is full of instances where the work of his servants is not completely righteous, or the motives for the actions of his servants are not completely pure. Yet God can and does use his servant's offerings to further his purpose of love and peace in the world. Peter made mistakes. He denied that he even knew God's son Jesus. James and John tried to claim glory for themselves instead of giving all the glory to God. David made a dreadful mistake in the story of David, Bathsheba and Uriah.**

**The work of God's human servants is never perfect. The servanthood of God's people is seldom done with completely pure motives, to honor God and God**

alone. Even the greatest servants have made huge mistakes. Perhaps this story about Abram can give us some comfort in our time and place. As we discussed last week, we are members of the same family of God as were Abram and Sarah. We are God's chosen people. God's grace was with Abram and Sarah enough so that even in this very imperfect and difficult time in our scripture passage, God's abundant purposes emerged. Abram's people emerged from Egypt, still God's chosen people, with an abundance of God's blessing.

As the church of the God of Abram, we have certainly made decisions that were not entirely for God's Glory. As individuals who choose to follow the God of Abram, we have made mistakes that have caused us to stray for a time from the will of our great God. But this story, for me, tells me that if I live in faith that God is always with me, in spite of my shortcomings, then God will use me to further his purpose of love in the world, even when I am afraid, even when I am distracted from time to time. God will take my imperfections, and my mistakes and use them to create a witness that is good. God will shape my life into a servanthood that is directed at accomplishing His purposes of glory. When we, as a church, answer the call from God to serve, I believe that God will use our churches in a way that will contribute to the completion of his revelation into our world. Because of our imperfect witness, there will be love. In spite of the mistakes that we make, there will be mercy and grace, joy and peace. This story where Abram and Sarah experience darkness and persevere long enough to find God's light brightly shining on their path moving forward, gives me hope that especially with the promise of grace and forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus our Savior, that my life, and the life of our church communities can play an important part of God's purpose of love, and peace in our world.

Perhaps this virus is our time of darkness. Certainly, in our world today, we face questions where the answers and explanations are difficult. Perhaps like Abram, we too will emerge from this time and look back and realize that we were not alone, it was God who carried us so that we could emerge from the darkness and continue to be the light of the world. The light that shines from the hearts of each member of the household of God. The God of Abram, and the God of our community, and the God of you and me.