

June 21, 2020

“Living Waters at Last”

Good Morning and Welcome Home

Now for weeks you all have been able to pause my sermons on the TV to refill your coffee or God forbid you could just fast forward through them if they started to drag, so if I see any of you doing this, I'm gonna know what your trying to do... Anyway

I don't know about you but I was thirsty for this, my soul was thirsty to be together with you all.

I remember as a part of basic training in the Army we were deprived of food and water for like a day so that in case we ever had to do without we would be able to handle it, well we all whined a lot and it wasn't easy but I can truly say that my life was never threatened in the process but that is not the case for Hagar and Ishmael.

Hagar and her son Ishmael are taken to the wilderness of the desert, by Abraham. He then leaves them with a little bread and a little water but that's it. Not a great lectionary text to happen to fall on Father's day because Abraham is certainly not going to get a Best Dad Ever Mug from Ishmael.

So they have been left to wander the desert, slave woman and unwanted child. Cut off from their community, stripped of the life they knew, basically left to die. and then the water runs out...

Hagar puts her crying and dying son under the shade of a bush and then walks as far as she can away from him without truly leaving him because she cannot bear listening to her son cry until he dies.

This passage breaks your heart. I cannot imagine what that must have been like for her. I barely handled it when our kids cried from sore throats, scraped knees or broken hearts.

But ... God *hears* this young child crying and this young mother wailing, this abandoned slave and child and this is where it goes from tragic to very cool very quickly because God is moved by their pain and has to get involved.

An angel of the Lord tells Hagar to go back toward her child, back toward the pain. He say's lift up that baby and hold him fast with your hand for I will make a great nation of him!

So she does, and it is in these acts, first of listening to God and secondly moving back toward the pain that she finds the solution to her predicament. Her eyes are opened to a well and from which they both drink deep and and are saved.

Cool thing #1 Ishmael means “God Hears” in Hebrew. So when we are in pain, when we lose everything, when we have given up, and given out, when we have been cast off, disregarded, left for dead and we cry out, GOD HEARS

Cool thing #2 When we move toward the pain of others, when we do what God asks *then* we see the solutions. The scripture doesn't say that God made a flowing well appear it says that God opened her eyes to it.

We have all been in those situations where we have been too distraught, too afraid, resentful or stubborn to see solutions right in front of us.

The trick is when we can't see the solutions is to do what God is asking us to do and the solutions will reveal themselves. How do we know what God is asking us to do? We ask ourselves what is the most loving thing I can do?

When we trust God, then more is revealed, obstacles that seem insurmountable start to shrink, and most of all, even if nothing changes we know beyond a doubt that though people may have abandoned us Our God never will.

Moving back toward pain, when somebody is hurting isn't easy, it takes courage, and strength that only comes from God, it takes trust and surrender.

So many times in the last few weeks I have just wanted to garden, to mow, to dead head my flowers to do anything but move toward any more pain, to listen to the pain of those who cry out.

Now, sometimes taking a break from the problems of the world is good and necessary but once we have we have to start listening to other's again, hearing other's again.

Not running away, not trying to emotionally distance ourselves by dismissing feelings, putting out platitudes or coming up with counter arguments that try to minimize or negate the story, experience and pain of others because it is just too much to deal with.

Folks there are absolutely no simple answers to the world's problems right now, we have hard work to do and we can't just try and pick sides so we can keep our out-dated world view in tact. When we do that we are part of the problem. Heck we are the problem.

We are Abraham and Sarah, pretty good people, making some pretty bad choices that nearly cost the life of Hagar and Ishmael.

Look, this story is ancient, it was written down in 500 or 600 BCE.

But had been a part of ancient oral history for who knows how long before that.

This story is a part of our DNA and it says beyond a doubt to me that God cares about those that society would seek to ignore or throw away.

I see us as a church that moves toward the cries in the wildness to take care of those who suffer, I see us as a church whose very DNA is about living out our faith by listening to the still speaking God.

Hagar and Ismael, a slave and a child unwanted by his earthly father. Pretty much Nobody's in that culture and society, people whose lives did not matter to anybody but to Our God,

Our God who Listens, Our God who Hears, Our God that reveals and never abandons, Let us be servants of that God, move toward pain and quench our thirst with the living waters. AMEN

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