



Sermon – 02/12/2023
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Verses Covered

Genesis 20:18

Psalms 105:14

Genesis 21:1 - 34

Genesis 16:1 - 2

Hebrews 11:11 - 12

Galatians 4:28 - 31

Let's open our Bibles together this morning. We're going to be in Genesis chapter 20. Genesis 20. If you're a guest with in the room, we're just so excited you're here. Welcome home. And I want you to know, for all of you that this morning is our next New Member Workshop. And you've been with us at Central for a while and you're ready to take a next step to dive into that, I want to invite you during the response time to make your way down here to begin that process. Or if you feel more comfortable, you can make your way out these doors and into the Grand Room is where our workshop will be taking place during the life group hour and at lunch. We've got a plan for your kids, we've got a plan for your food during the lunchtime. So, if you've got that interest, today is the day to get that next step started.

Now as you're turning to Genesis 20, I want to ask you this morning, what is the most anxious time of the day? There was some guys that did some research. They conducted a study that looked at people's lives and they wanted to pinpoint the exact time on the clock that was the most stressful, the most anxious for people. Do you think it was in the morning, maybe the afternoon, or the evening? What do you think? It's in the mornings. And so the most stressful time of the day, the time you're feeling the deepest anxiety, the greatest fear about your life, they pinpointed to a specific minute. 7:23 a.m. So you may want to make a note and ask yourself how you're doing tomorrow morning at 7:23. That might be the low point of the day. Now how did they come up with that? As they interviewed and as they examined people, what they discovered is that morning rush is often when the anxiety fuels us. We've got our mind on what's ahead for the day. We're trying to get out the door. We're trying to beat that train across Wellborn. We're trying to get our kids to school on time. All of those things are gripping us. It feels as if everything is against us. And the challenge that we face as we look at the day and we're not sure where we're going. We're not sure how we're going to make it. Do you ever find it hard to trust God with your future? When you're looking ahead, you struggle with trusting Him about what's going to happen after next

semester. Or you struggle with what's going to happen to him about whether He's ever going to bring that future spouse into your life. Or you struggle with whether He's ever going to meet your financial needs during inflation. Or that project's going to get done on time. Or the kids are going to grow up to be OK. Or the retirement will finally work out the way that you hope it is. And in each of those moments, what we find is our hearts and our minds keep getting drawn back to our problems rather than His promise.

Do you ever struggle to trust God with your future? Because if you do this morning, you're not alone in that. Around this room, we're filled with people gripped with fear and anxiety. And, in fact, in this text we find that exact truth in the story of Abraham. And if we can see how God meets him in his fear and his flesh with His favor, it can give us a hope for the future of each one of us. Now as we turn our attention to the text, here's what I need you to understand. Genesis 20 is like a turning point in the life of Abraham where he's faced with the choice between his fear and his faith. He's faced with a choice between his flesh and God's favor. And what we're going to do this morning is work our way all the way through Genesis 20 and 21. Our boys love a movie called Shrek. You remember that one back in the day? One of my favorite lines, he's talking about how ogres are like onions. You remember that one? He says, "Ogres are like onions. They have layers." Well, the book of Genesis has layers too. And when we look at this passage, we're going to see first in the outer layer at the beginning of 20 and at the end of 21, one problem that Abraham and all of us face. And then we're going to look at that inner layer in the first part of 21 to see another that we all encounter. And so, what's going to happen as we work our way through this passage is we're going to come face to face with two problems all of us deal with rooted in two questions that all of us ask that stand in the way of two promises that all of us long for. So let's see how that plays out now beginning in Genesis 20 and verse 1.

¹From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. ²And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. ³But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman you have taken, for she is a man's wife." ⁴Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, "Lord, will you kill an innocent people?" ⁵Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." ⁶Then God said to him in his dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. ⁷Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours." ⁸So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid. ⁹Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done." ¹⁰And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you see, that you did this thing?" ¹¹Abraham said, "I did it because I thought, 'There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.'" ¹²Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. ¹³And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, 'This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, "He is

my brother.”””” ¹⁴Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him. ¹⁵And Abimelech said, “Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you.” ¹⁶To Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated.” ¹⁷Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. ¹⁸For the Lord had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Let's pray together in this time. And as we pause to pray, I want us to fix our hearts for just a moment on what's happened in the countries of Turkey and Syria. This devastating earthquake, tens of thousands of lives lost. And I know our church has missionaries even right now that we support through the International Mission Board on the ground, including ones like my friends and Garrett and Lee that I want us to pray for specifically in this time as we go to the Lord.

Father, we come to You and we're coming to You this morning pleading that by Your strength, by Your Spirit, by Your grace that You would help us find freedom from the fear that so easily entangles us. And from the anxiety that so commonly racks our hearts, God. And that You would use this text to show us that we cannot depend on our own strength, but we must rely on Yours alone, Father. And in this time, we're lifting up the people of Turkey and Syria, recovering from this devastation, facing a future filled with anxiety because many of them have lost it all. And, Lord, we pray that You would use this moment of brokenness, of desperation to open their eyes to Jesus. We pray for our missionaries there, especially ones like Garrett and Lee. That You would use them as a light in the darkness to draw people to Yourself by the power of Your word. To be a faithful presence in that midst. Boldly proclaiming Your truth, being Your hands and feet to the people around them. We pray all these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Alright, so what do we say this text focuses on? It's two problems, two questions, two promises. So what's the first problem we see right here in Genesis 20? It's the problem of our fear. And what is fear at its root? It's when we do not believe that God can do what needs to be done. It's when we don't believe that God can do what needs to be done. That's at the root of our fear. And what happens here is that underneath that problem is a question. It's a question of our inheritance. It's a question that often we phrase like this. Where am I going? Where am I going? Because what happens is when we don't know where we're going, we often fill that void with fear, with anxiety. And that's precisely what we see here in the life of Abraham. I mean, look back at verse 1 and it tells us he's journeying, he's sojourning through this place of the Negeb. He's wrestling with that question, “Where am I going?” And even though he's in a new place, he resorts to an old pattern. Look back at verse 2 when it says,

²And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.”

We've already seen him do this once in Genesis 12 when he was in Egypt during the famine. And why would he do it again? Didn't he learn his lesson before? Well, look at his reason he gives us in verse 11 when he tells us why he lies. It says,

¹¹Abraham said, “I did it because I thought, ‘There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’”

In other words, he didn’t believe that God could protect him so he used his wife to accomplish what he doubted was able to do. And you can’t help but miss the irony there, right. In verse 11 when it says, there was no fear of God amongst the peoples, when he’s the one who’s actually struggling to fear God and to trust Him. So notice what happens here in the passages. Abraham’s fear places the promises of God in danger. They’re in jeopardy. And so God intervenes to do what Abraham cannot. So speaking about this verse in Psalm 105 in verse 14, I want you to hear how the psalmist talks about how God intervenes. He says,

¹⁴God allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account.

It’s talking about this passage right here. Because what happens in the text is God doesn’t first rebuke Abraham, he comes to Abimelech and rebukes him. You see that back in verse 5 and 6. And Abimelech’s response is he declares his innocence, he pleads before God in verse 6 like this in a way that teaches us an important lesson about how we’re to live our life before God. It says,

⁶Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her.”

The two phrases I want you to notice here. Do you see that phrase in the middle of verse 6, the integrity of your heart? When God speaks to Abimelech here, he’s reminding all of us of this truth that our integrity doesn’t begin with what we do with our hands but what we do with our hearts. That our of the heart, that’s the wellspring of life that flows the way we live. And we are called to be men and women of integrity. Why? Because of what verse 6 also reminds us of at the end of it. It says,

I was the one who kept you from sinning against me.

Now remember, if Abimelech had taken Sarah as his wife, he would have been sinning against her. But if that would have occurred, what God is confronting him and us with is the reality that when he sins against her, it is actually a sin against God Himself. But God in His kindness as it says there at the end of verse 6, kept him from doing exactly that. He protects the line through which the offspring of the promise is about to come. And after this, Abraham is convicted. He prays for Abimelech and his people. God reopens their wombs so that they may continue to have children. And at the heart of this moment, when Abraham faces an uncertain future, when he doesn’t know where he’s going, it brings us face to face with his fear and ours. Do you have trouble trusting God with your future? We saw Abraham struggling with it here. And at the core of that, we’re wrestling with that question, where am I going? I mean there are some of you in the room this morning who have met Jesus in a saving way. You know that God has changed your life forever. You’ve seen Him work out your problems in the past. And yet you still find yourself on the doorstep of fear. It’s knocking at your heart every morning when you wake up seeking to devour you. And at the root of that reality, is that for some of us, even though we found Jesus, we’re able to look at God and say, “I know You’ve got this. I know You’ve got me. I know I can trust You for salvation. I know You’ve got me, but I’m not sure You’ve got this

problem, this trial, this broken relationship, this insurmountable mountain that stands before you.” And what we’re going to see as we now jump ahead to chapter 21, starting in verse 22 is that God meets the problem of our fear with the promise of a new place. With a promise of a new future. And so even though Abraham has turned his back on God, God refuses to turn His back on Abraham. He refuses to turn His back on us. And we’ll see how he meets this moment, this fear and this anxiety in the life of Abraham beginning in Genesis 21 down in verse 22. So let’s keep going in the text.

²²At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, “God is with you in all that you do. ²³Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or with my posterity, but as I have dealt kindly with you, so you deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned.” ²⁴And Abraham said, “I will swear.” ²⁵When Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized, ²⁶Abimelech said, “I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today.” ²⁷So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant. ²⁸Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart. ²⁹And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?” ³⁰He said, “These seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand, that this may be a witness for me that I dug this well.” ³¹Therefore that place was called Beersheba, because there both of them swore an oath. ³²So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army rose up and returned to the land of the Philistines. ³³Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. ³⁴And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines.

And many of us have been tracking the story of Damar Hamlin since he nearly died on a football field just a few weeks ago. And he made an appearance at one of the pre-Super Bowl festivities this year. He gave his first public speech. And one of the quotes that he said has been ringing in my ears since then. He was standing and behind him were all the medical and health professionals who saved his life. And as he stood there on the stage, he said, “I’ve a long journey ahead. A journey full of unknowns and a journey full of milestones. But it’s a lot easier to face your fears when you know your purpose.” You hear that? It’s a lot easier to face your fears when you know your purpose. And that’s the essence of what God is pointing us to here in His response to Abraham. That we can face our fears when we know His purpose. When we understand His promise. When we see its fulfilment taking place. And that’s exactly what we find here at the end of Genesis 21. So, if Abraham had reason to fear before, you would think even more so right now back in verse 22. Because Abimelech comes up and he brings this guy Phicol the commander of the army. And you can imagine Abraham coming, seeing them coming, saying, “Oh no, what’s going to happen? What’s going to take place?” But rather than put him in danger as he might have feared, instead, they pursue him for relationship. They desire to make a covenant with him. And why is that? Look back at the end of verse 22. Because they see something in Abraham. They see that God is with you in all that you do. They want to have a relationship with him because they know he has a relationship with God. And so they work out this treaty of water and of warfare. And verse 27 tells us what happens next. It says,

²⁷Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two made a covenant.

And so they marked out this place, Beersheba, the place of the well of the oath. And in the aftermath of that, look at how Abraham responds to this big moment. Is it with fear? Is it with anxiety? No, what verse 33 shows us is it's not fear but faith. Notice how it says it there.

³³Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.

So, why is it that he responds to this moment in worship? Well, it's because Abraham knows that from the beginning God's given him the promise of a new people living in a new place carrying out a new purpose. And right here in the making of this treaty, we see the first fulfilment of the promise of that new place. They finally have land in the place of promise. He finally sees God's promises coming true and the fear melts away as he is overcome by the fulfilment of the promise of God. I just want you to think again with me about that particular fear that you're carrying in here this morning. We've just taken our boys through watching some of the Lord of the Rings movies, and I wonder sometimes if that fear, that anxiety, in your life haunts you like Gollum. It's following you all around waiting for that moment of weakness to strike. Or maybe for you, that fear is like the Eye of Sauron. It's always seeking you, trying to find you, and to pierce straight into your heart. What is that anxiety this morning? Because the way we find deliverance from the problem of our fear is through the promises of God. And we have even greater promises to stand on than Abraham. I mean, think about it, whenever you feel as if your whole life is out of place, just like his, we know that God has made a place for us. And even when you don't know where you are going, we can stand on the truth that Jesus has gone before us. He's made a way for us through the cross and He will come and bring us to Himself. When you feel as if you're completely alone. As if no one around you cares for you. We can stand on an even greater truth in Genesis 21/22. Because just as Abimelech saw that God was with Abraham, how much more so is that true with His Son Jesus Christ? God Himself. Living inside you by the power of His Spirit. Allowing you to find freedom from the fear that faces you. And we can stand in the midst of anxiety because we have a greater promise than a temporary treaty with a king that is dead. Instead, our promise is based on the everlasting covenant that comes from the King of Kings who will reign forever. What are we afraid of? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Let's look back at how the text keeps going. Before we read further in Genesis 21, I need you to slide back a few chapters with me to Genesis 16. And Genesis 16 is going to bring us face to face with the second problem that Abraham and all of us fear. It's not just the problem of our fear, it's the problem of our flesh. If the problem of fear is based on our desire to walk by sight, then the problem of our flesh is our desire to walk by strength. If fear says, "I do not believe that God can do what needs to be done." The flesh comes behind that and says, "I believe that I'm the only one that can do what needs to be done. I'm going to take matters into my own hands." And that's exactly what we saw happen back in Genesis 16 whenever they are wrestling with that underlying question behind that problem of the flesh. It's the question of identity. Who am I becoming? What's going to happen to me and my family? You'll see the way that Abraham and Sarah handle themselves in Genesis 16. When the child of the promise hasn't yet come and they take matters into their own hands. They operate in the strength of their flesh. They try to

take the promises of God and bring them about apart from the plan of God. So notice how it talks about it in verse 1. Genesis 16.

¹Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. ²And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai his wife.

So what happens here is rather than wait on God, rather than trust Him, they begin to operate in the flesh. They begin to operate in their own strength. They take His plans and pursue them through their own design. And what happens is, rather than solve their problems, it creates even deeper problems that take us back to Genesis chapter 21 where we're going to pick up beginning in verse 1. Because what happens here is that just as God meets the problem of our fear with a greater promise, He also meets the problem of our flesh with a greater promise. This time, the promise of a new people. And we see that fulfilled in the birth of Isaac beginning in Genesis 21, verse 1 when it says,

¹The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised. ²And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. ³Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. ⁴And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." ⁷And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.

So what we notice here is that our flesh cannot stop God's fulfilment of His promises. Even though they had turned away from God in Genesis 16, God doesn't turn away from them. He brings this child, Isaac. And look at the way it talks about it in verse 1. The Lord visited Sarah. She's 90 years old. Abraham is right at 100 years old. They welcome the child of the promise into their arms. And listen to the way that Hebrews 11 speaks about it. Beginning in verse 11 it talks about this birth like this.

¹¹By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

So in other words, even though they had previously relied on themselves, on their own strength, on their flesh, God still fulfils in miniature right here. The first fulfilment of His promise of a new people. He meets their problems with a promise. And what we have here in the birth of Isaac in Genesis 21 is this amazing picture of a descendant of his who'll come. One from the line of Abraham. A son of Abraham. A new and better Isaac who will come. And just as Isaac is a seed of the woman who is promised that from him will come one who will crush the head of the serpent, we see Jesus coming as that seed of the woman who does through His death and resurrection crush the heads of His enemies. And just as we see in Isaac this miraculous birth that God opens the womb of this old lady, that barren woman who had longed for decades for a

child, He now makes that way when it seems as if there is no way. It is pointing ahead to an even more miraculous birth in the New Testament. One that doesn't come to a woman who's very old, but one who is very young. Not one who has been with a husband for many years, but one who has not yet married. And what we find in that life of Jesus is that God bestows on Mary an infant, a child, who had come in a fulfillment of the promise to bring deliverance to the nations. To bring freedom to the captives. To make a way for you and I to be made right with God this morning. To find deliverance from our sin, from our fears, from our flesh. And we think as we look at this passage we would just see a happily ever after moment. That the credits would roll and we'd move on with all of the tension and the problems resolved. But that's not the case. We see that the complexities of life in a broken world continue even after the initial fulfillment of the promise of God. You and I need to understand that reality. Just because we've received those promises through faith in Jesus, it doesn't mean that our life is going to be simple. That we won't face trials. That we won't experience hardships. Instead, it reminds us of the reality that God can sustain us through them. So let's see how those challenges play out beginning down in Genesis 21:8. It says, everything seems, it says there beginning in verse 8,

⁸And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. ¹⁰So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." ¹¹And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. ¹²But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. ¹³And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." ¹⁴So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

I know we're all looking forward to the Super Bowl tonight. And in that stadium in Arizona, there will be filled with Eagles fans, it'll be filled with Chiefs fans. But there will be one person in the stadium with a divided heart during the game. I don't know if you've heard about Donna Kelce. She's the mom of the first ever time for two brothers to be playing in the Super Bowl against each other. Her son Jason, an all-pro center for the Philadelphia Eagles. Her son Travis, an all-pro tight end for the Kansas City Chiefs. Tonight you'll probably see her in the stands. She'll be wearing a jersey that one half of it is a Chiefs jersey, the other half of it is an Eagle's jersey. There's a divided house. A divided interest. And you can get the same type of sense here in this moment with Abraham when he's faced with this difficult situation. That after the birth of Isaac, Sarah sees Ishmael laughing. Mocking her. Mocking the promise of God. And she wants him gone. She wants Hagar out. And you can see back in verse 10 the way she tells Abraham. So, cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac. Verse 11 tells us this is displeasing to Abraham. He doesn't want to do it. But he's not sure of what to do. And God speaks to him in that moment and allows Abraham to send them out. But he sends them out with the promise of provision and protection. Which is going to bring us to the end of the passage now in verse 15 when it tells us what happens to Hagar and Ishmael. It says,

¹⁵When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. ¹⁶Then she went down and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for she said, “Let me not look on the death of the child.” And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation.” ¹⁹Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. ²⁰And God was with the boy, and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. ²¹He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Can you sense the desperation in Hagar’s heart back in verse 16? I mean, just look at the way it talks about it at the end of the verse. It says, “Let me not look upon the death of my child.” She knows what’s going to happen to him. She knows his days are done. But in that despair, she moves away. In desperation she doesn’t want to see him die. But in that moment, what happens? God does not forsake her. If you remember back in Genesis 16, when God rescued her the first time this happened, she gave him a new name. The god who sees me. And now the one that she named the god who sees me, sees her. He sees her desperation. And what He does is he opens her eyes now to show her the provision that He’s about to provide. He gives her this vision of the provision. The one who sees her allows her to see Him. How He’s working. How He is protecting. But there’s something deeper going on in this passage. As Isaac and Ishmael come forth from Abraham as different descendants, the New Testament tells us that there’s more going on here in the text than what we see. So I want us to find one final passage in the Scripture from Galatians 4 beginning in verse 28. Because what Paul does is he says, when we look back on Ishmael and we look back on Isaac, that what’s happening there is not just what’s taking place literally, but what’s taking place figuratively. Paul earlier in the chapter in Galatians 4 says that Ishmael is like a figurative representative of the Mosaic Covenant. That covenant of law. That covenant of condemnation. That covenant that enslaves us to the sin that it confronts us with. But Isaac is the covenant, the child of the Abrahamic Covenant. That is fulfilled in Jesus through the giving of the new covenant. And there’s this contrast set up that we are not children of the flesh but children of the promise. So hear these final words in Galatians 4:28.

²⁸Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now for us. ³⁰But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” ³¹So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

So what Paul is saying here is that Genesis 21 is a picture for us of the gift of the Gospel. He says, you need to remember who you are as children of God. You’re not children of the slave woman but of the free woman. You are children of the promise, a greater promise than God gave to Abraham here with a new place. A greater promise than the promise that God gave Abraham here of a new people. Instead, we see both of those things come together in Jesus. The son of Abraham, the new and better Isaac who makes a way for us to find freedom from the things that weigh us down. The shame, the guilt, the sin that make us believe we can never stand

before a holy God. He frees us from that through His blood. The fear, the flesh that make us turn inward for our own provision rather than upward. He makes a way for us. So what does that mean for us, Central? Well, in just a few weeks we get the opportunity to host a concert right here in our worship center by Chris Tomlin. I imagine many of you are already making plans to join us. He's an amazing Christian artist. But what some of you may not know is that back in the mid-90's when he was a student at Texas A&M, Chris Tomlin was a part of our church. He used to be a youth worship intern for Tim Skaggs when he led the student ministry. And it was all downhill from there. He never got a more prestigious opportunity than that. You know, back in the day we had this incredible program called Adopt An Aggie. Where we would match up college students, much like we do today with our mentorship program, with adults who would welcome them into their home. Maybe feed them a meal. Help them with laundry. Invest in them in their life. And as a side note for you college students, we've got over 20 men or women right now who are ready to start mentoring the moment they're matched. And all you've got to do is go talk to Patrick or Peyton or Sam to get connected to one of those opportunities. And when Tomlin was here, he got matched up with one of our families. And they invested in him over the time as he was wrestling with, "Do I pursue my degree in psychology and the things that come after that or do I chase my passion into this pursuit of music?" And I was talking with the man who was his mentor during that Adopt An Aggie time not long ago, and he said, "You know," the way I would translate it is, he said, "I gave the worst advice I've ever given any college student to Chris Tomlin." I said, "Well what do you mean?" He said, "I looked at Tomlin as he was trying to decide what to do and I said, 'Hey, if you want to chase your passion, just make sure you have a backup plan.'" Could you imagine being the guy that told Chris Tomlin to have a backup plan when it comes to music. It's unthinkable all these years later. But just come face to face with yourself this morning. How many of us are making backup plans for the promises of God in our life? Look, let me be clear. There's nothing wrong with a good backup plan. If you're not sure where God is leading you, it's wise to have a backup plan. I'm not talking about when you don't know where God is leading you. I'm talking about where you do know where He's leading you. That you don't just possess a backup plan, but it now possesses you. And when we come face to face with Abraham in this text, we see he had a backup plan when it came to Abimelech. We see he had a backup plan when it came to Ishmael. He trusted that God had him. He wasn't trusting that God had this. And God is looking to him this morning in the same way He is looking at us. And the call of the Gospel is we need to burn our backup plans. We need to surrender it all to Jesus. We need to go all in in fighting our fear, fighting our flesh, turning those things over to Him. Because He gives us a greater promise that can conquer even our greatest problems.

Let's pray towards that reality right now as we close our time together.

Father, I don't know the hearts of every person in this room. But I'm sure there are some here today whose hearts are far from You. The trials of life, the temptations of the devil have turned them away from You. And, Lord, if they're back here giving You another chance, I pray that You meet them in this moment. That You show them that Your promises are worth it. And, Lord, I lift up our people. That as they're seeing the trials and the tribulations and the temptations of a broken world and they don't know if it's worth it to keep pressing on, that You will remind them that Jesus is better. That You have more to offer us in Your Son than anything this world has to offer to us. And would You help us be men and women who do not walk by

fear but by faith. Who do not walk by the flesh but by Your faith so that we can bring You honor through Your Son in whose name we pray. Amen.