

Hagar: Seen by God

Fitchburg Nazarene Church

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by

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(These are the Pastor's notes. He may have said more which is not noted here. He could have ignored certain portions of these notes in our actual service.)

Happy Mother's Day!

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

¹In you, Lord, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.

²Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.

³Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me.

⁴Keep me free from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge.

⁵Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.

¹⁵My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me.

¹⁶Let your face shine on your servant;

save me in your unfailing love.

COMMUNITY PRAYER

Genesis 16:1-16

¹Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; ²so she said to Abram, "*The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.*"

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar

and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

⁴He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. ⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, *“You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.”*

⁶*“Your slave is in your hands,”* Abram said. *“Do with her whatever you think best.”*

Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so, she fled from her.

⁷The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. ⁸And he said, *“Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?”*

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered.

⁹Then the angel of the Lord told her, *“Go back to your mistress and submit to her.”*

¹⁰The angel added, *“I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.”*

¹¹The angel of the Lord also said to her:

“You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery.

¹²*He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.”*

¹³She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: *“You are the God who sees me,”* for

she said, “*I have now seen the One who sees me.*” ¹⁴That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

(Well of the Living One who sees me.)

¹⁵So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

PRAYER

I know, I know; this is a very unusual passage of scripture for Mother’s Day. But,

how many more sermons do you need to hear on Mother's Day, from **Proverbs 31**?

I read the whole of this chapter for context, but it's really just one verse that I want us to key in on this morning. If we were to focus on the many different aspects of our text, we would find aplenty, things to discuss. But on this Mother's Day, I want us to focus on **verse 13**, where we read:

¹³She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: "*You are the God who sees me,*" for she said, "*I have now seen the One who sees me.*"

“You are the God who sees me.” How often do you stop to realize that you do not live in isolation from the Lord?

I know it can feel that way – isolated - especially in the crucible of life, when it can seem that everything is going against you – when it doesn’t seem that the battle will ever assuage.

In the midst of the fray it is easy to ask yourself, *“Does anyone even see me? Does anyone really care? Does anyone hear me?”*

This was the plight of Hagar.

Her circumstances: SLAVE.

Top that! I don't say that to diminish what anyone is going through – not at all. We each face struggles in life; many alike, some unique. But whether a slave like Hagar, or simply a woman with A LOAD AND A HALF on her plate – day in, day out – struggling physically, struggling emotionally; wondering if there is a tomorrow worth giving herself to – **THERE IS THE ONE WHO SEES YOU!!**

Hagar – as I stated – was a slave. She was the slave of Abram's wife Sarai, and someone has to go a long way to convince me that she wasn't taken advantage of.

Today we have a myriad of ways to help couples to overcome infertility. Of course, sadly, even that doesn't always work. But then for many, there is the blessing that doubles as a gift; to bring children into families who want them, through adoption!

But for Sarai, the options were limited. So, being Hagar's mistress, she ordered her to attempt getting pregnant with her husband Abram. No options – do as you're told! (Seems it felt that way to Abram too – at least at first. In verse 6 he tells Sarai, ⁶*“Your slave is in your hands,”* Abram said. *“Do with her whatever you think best.”*

There was no attempt at saving this woman he has impregnated – only appeasing Sarai. Talk about feeling low. How did Hagar feel; made pregnant by a man who wouldn't protect her, mistreated by the woman who made her get pregnant to begin with?

Now, guaranteed; Hagar exacerbated that situation all by herself. Yet, still. Not great circumstances for Hagar.

I couldn't begin to imagine the “*filling in of the blanks*” of this story – the complicated moment by moment of this story unfolding to the place where this pregnant slave woman – seemingly, out of choices – finds no recourse, but to run away.

But it's not the particular circumstances of the one suffering that are notable to me: it is the answer that satisfies the soul that I find intriguing. For Hagar, finds satisfaction for her soul, and strength to press on.

The person, AND the answer that satisfies, are one and the same – for Hagar, or for anyone who is suffering – The angel of the LORD.

Now, I want to get back to Hagar, but to get back, I have to go elsewhere first. I can't think of a better place than to trying to

answer the question: “Who is this “*angel of the LORD*” who ‘sees’ her?”

There are three major views held, to answer this question. I’ll list the three, but I need to tell you where your pastor leans - #3.

Who is the ‘angel of the LORD?’

1. A mighty angel who acted as the special representative of the LORD.
2. God the Father assuming a human body.
3. **God the Son**, taking a body for a short period of time.¹

I invite you to do your own study of “*the angel of the LORD*” – you can ask that simple question on the web, and harvest a huge amount of material to read.

For now, let’s go with Pastor Chuck’s belief that as we study the scriptures regarding this topic, we lean more toward this being a “pre-incarnate” appearance of Jesus, the Son of God.

That is... before Jesus was born in a manger to the virgin, Mary, he sometimes took on “*human form*”, SO OTHER-WORLDLY, that to those He spoke with – He appeared to be an angel – a “sent one.”

With these thoughts in view, look at how this angel of the LORD – how Jesus – relates to Hagar.

Verse 7

Jesus/Angel of the LORD... meets us where we are.

⁷The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.

Jesus/Angel of the LORD... meets us where we are.

It doesn't matter where you are: if you're running away, hiding out, stuck in a rut, chained to sinful habits – it doesn't matter where YOU are – Jesus is willing to meet us there. So willing, that He comes there unbidden; just because He cares; seeking the least, the last, the lost.

Verse 8

Jesus/Angel of the LORD... calls us by name.

⁸And he said, “*Hagar, slave of Sarai, ...*”

Jesus/Angel of the LORD... calls us by name.

Our true identity doesn't scare Jesus off. He knows all the ugly part of us, but He calls out – calls to life – His good for us – starting with KNOWING our name.

Also, in Verse 8,

Jesus/Angel of the LORD... asks us to be real.

⁸And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, *where have you come from, and where are you going?*”

Jesus/Angel of the LORD... asks us to be real.

Sometimes we are found running from difficult circumstances which He wants to redeem. If I can borrow the old saying, “He can make lemonade out of lemons.” But we must admit we’ve got lemons.

Sometimes we are headed down a path that we know is wrong. Wanting us to be real, He wants to know where we think our current path will lead us.

The angel of the LORD found Hagar at a spring “*that is beside the road to Shur*” (vs. 7). In other words, she was headed back to Egypt; to where her people came from.

I don't know what the circumstances of Hagar's slavery were. But I do have to ask myself, "In a time and place where slavery was allowed, what did a return to "home" hold for Hagar?"

If we were just to read verse 9 and neglect to hear the following verse – we would miss the promise which filled Hagar with the stamina to do as the LORD asked, "*Go back to your mistress and submit to her.*"

So, what was the promise? What was it that helped Hagar find satisfaction for her soul, and strength to press on?

It was the fact that God SAW HER!

He heard her cry!

He spoke out her fear – that she would lose her own son to the woman who owned her.

He promised her a posterity, and this satisfied her motherly hopes and fears.

What is your fear, this morning?

Are you afraid of what tomorrow holds?

Do you fear that God neither sees, nor hears your cries?

Jesus cared enough then, to come to Hagar's aide. He cares enough for you too! He sees you!

For those of you who know the book of Genesis well, you will remember that another tough time came to Hagar.

15 or 16 years go by and Ishmael is raised, the son of **Abram**. He is circumcised on the same day as his father, "*Abraham*." But when Isaac – the son of promise – is weaned, it becomes apparent to Sarai, now Sarah; that Ishmael is mocking his little brother Isaac.

All her old fears come back, and Sarah has Abraham send Hagar and her 15 or 16-year-old son Ishmael, away.

Genesis 21 tells us this end of the story, where Hagar and the boy are dying of thirst in the Desert of Beersheba. Once again, the angel of God comes to Hagar and encourages her. Look with me at **verses 17-21**.

¹⁷God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “*What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.* ¹⁸*Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.*”

¹⁹Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So, she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink

²⁰God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer.

²¹While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

There are so many tracts this message could have taken. I hope you have been encouraged by the word of God this morning. Whether you are a mother, or a woman or man; the news is just the same.

He is the God who sees us!

He often calls us to the same thing he called Hagar to; “*Go back to your mistress and submit to her.*”

Go back to your toil and pain. Go back and be obedient whatever the circumstances God calls us to be faithful in.

Whatever our pain; whatever our sorrow; God has a plan that we cannot see, but we are encouraged to remember:

We are not alone!

PRAYER

Revised Common Lectionary

Readings for 05/10/2020

Acts 7:55-60

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

1. Stewart, D. (24 Apr, 2007). Who Is the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament? Retrieved from

https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_26.cfm