

July 5, 2020

Ps 145:14-18; Gen 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67;
Ro 7:18-25a; Mt 11:16-19, 25-30

5th Sun after Pentecost

Abraham lived to be 175 years old. We receive this information as Scripture – so, we read it with faith. By the time his son, Isaac, was old enough to marry, Abe was carefully building the legacy that God had promised. He was not about to marry his son to a Canaanite woman. We noted last week that he lived among a people who had many, many gods – but Abraham kept a godly way of life devoted to the Creator God. In those days, young people accepted the arranged marriage that their fathers negotiated. And, for Isaac, the heir of God's promise, Abraham knew this wife had to be a special person.

Back in chapter 15 of Genesis, we learn the name of Abraham's trusted servant, Eliezer of Damascus. Bringing this forward to our story for today, we may presume that Abraham's most faithful man was still Eliezer. So, Abraham is instructing him and blessing him all the way to Mesopotamia and back. He declares that an angel of the Lord will go before Eliezer, so that his mission will be successful.

The story is beautiful – and Eliezer appears to have prayed the whole time he traveled – and encountered Rebekah – and asked for a drink of water. Now, this young woman was kin to Nahor, Abraham's brother. Things were going very well. You cannot call the meeting of Eliezer and Rebekah a coincidence.

The story is so delicious that we see Eliezer in the house, accepting the hospitality of Laban, Rebekah's brother. Surely at supper and perhaps around the fire later, he retells the story – so that it appears twice. Thus, we hear two witnesses of the angelic guidance, the providential meeting at the well and Eliezer's message of proposal to the beautiful young woman.

Have you ever made a journey on which you prayed every step of the way? Perhaps you have traveled to do family business – or to discharge an obligation – or a duty. You pray for the travel, you pray for the people you will meet, you pray for the luggage, you pray for a parking place. So, Eliezer goes filled with trust in the One he calls "The Lord of my master, Abraham." In verse 48 we see him bow down and praise and thank and worship the God of Abraham. We know that Abraham is praying back in Canaan. The whole endeavor is bathed in prayer and faithful expectation. God does not disappoint.

Even crusty old Laban recognizes that the thing is from God. We will hear more of Laban later in the saga of the Nation of Israel. He is shrewd and calculating. Yet, he joins in the blessing of Rebekah: that she will be the mother of thousands of ten thousands and that she will prosper in the midst of her enemies. (vv 59-60) Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel are the mothers of the nation.

The words of the Apostle Paul to the church in Rome are an icon for those who have seen unfavorable outcomes, adversity and especially doubt – the opposite of trust. Paul describes himself as a poor, sinful wretch who has at last seen the truth that he is a fallen creature. He has learned what goodness is – but knows that he cannot reach it. Neither he – nor I – nor you – can attain anything like goodness or rightness on our own. Something is required to overcome the evil that swamps our best intentions. And Eliezer gives us a key. While he goes forth with the best plan possible – he trusts in God every step of the way. Doubts crowd in. The going may get tough before it gets better. But Eliezer gives himself to the Lord as an agent of God's will.

The Apostle asks, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" The battle is between the fallen nature and the call of God to surrender to God's perfect will. So, as in a masterful Japanese wood-block print, we see the shape and outline of Messiah. Not yet realized in the 2nd millennium BC – but clearly present. What *is inked* in the print indicates *what is not* – the empty space shaped by the inked-in design – the divine silence before the Word is spoken. Things that are

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not yet – indicated by things that are. The love story of Isaac and Rebekah indicates the path of Abraham’s blessing – bringing more blessing to coming generations and the founding of the nation.

Another example of trust in God: John Baptist emerging from his ecstatic prayer life – out of the wilderness to the edge of Jerusalem – to prophesy that Messiah is here. John called out the corrupt and sinful leaders of Israel. Jesus stepped into the space John had prophesied so clearly by the moving of God’s Spirit. This is fulfillment in the greatest sense.

Even when He showed up, Jesus’ Kingdom was misunderstood by the hard-hearted and world- weary and the philosophers of the day. Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You’ve hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have shown them to babies. Indeed, Father, this brings you happiness.” (Mt 11:25-26)
Jesus says:

“Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light.” (Mt 11:28-29)

Do you feel that you have been battling dragons, or monsters or the systems of this world? Here and now this morning, draw refreshment from the Lord. Look to Abraham and his trusty servant, Eliezer. Look to the Apostle Paul, who thanks “God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Ro 7:25a) Look to John Baptist, who spoke out boldly that the kingdom of God is at hand.

Take courage in the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in God. His kingdom is here among us. Amen.