

Trusting the God Who Sees You

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Preacher: Billy McKillop, Executive Pastor

[0 : 00] Because you took matters into your own hands? Well, since the fall of man, we are always being tempted to live our lives rather than by faith but by what we can see, what we can do.

And the drama recorded in this chapter, it really illustrates the difference between trusting in God's promises by faith and seeking our blessings through our own human effort.

And it highlights the mercy of God when we do fail, that we need God's mercy in an ongoing way. So back in Genesis 12, we can read about God's call to Abraham to leave his father's household and his country, remember, and go to a new land.

And we read about his promise to Abraham and he said, I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you and I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. And God says, I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you, I will curse and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you, Abraham.

Abraham obeys God's call and on his journey to the new land, the Lord God appeared to him again and he said, to your offspring, I will give this land. And it says, Abraham, worship the Lord.

[1 : 11] And then in Genesis 16, our passage today, it seems that Abraham and Sarah, they have some doubts about, you know, God following through on what he said and they're tempted by that popular but very bad theology that says what God helps those who help themselves.

Have you ever heard that? I'm sure you have. Well, let's look at Genesis 16, the whole chapter, we'll read it together this morning. And then we'll ask for God's blessings. Now, Sarah, Abram's wife had born him no children.

She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarah said to Abram, behold, now the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go into my servant.

It may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram listened to the voice of Sarah. So after Abram had lived 10 years in the land of Canaan, Sarah, Abram's wife, took Hagar, the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram, her husband, as a wife.

And he went into Hagar and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarah said to Abram, may the wrong done to me be on you.

[2 : 28] I gave you my servant to your embrace. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me. But Abram said to Sarah, behold, your servant is in your power.

Do to her as you please. Then Sarah dealt harshly with her and she fled from her. The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to shore.

And he said, Hagar, servant of Sarah, where have you come from and where are you going? She said, I'm fleeing from my mistress, Sarah. The angel of the Lord said to her, return to your mistress and submit to her.

The angel of the Lord also said to her, I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said to her, behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son.

You shall call his name Ishmael because the Lord has listened to your affliction. He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.

[3 : 35] So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her. You are a God of seeing. For she said, truly here I have seen him who looks after me. Therefore the well was called Bir Lahai Roy.

It lies between Kadesh and Barad. And Hagar bore Abram a son. And Abram called the name of his son whom Hagar bore Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Amen. That's the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Father, we thank you again for worship. Thank you for corporate worship that we can gather together today on the Lord's day, your day, to bring praises to you, to look at your word, to ask again for your mercy and to give you thanks for all that you have done.

Father, help us to see more of our Lord Jesus, more of your incredible love for us, and let it bring everything else in our lives and in the world into perspective.

Forgive us, all of us, for our sins and for the preacher this morning, for his sins we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You can be seated. Amen. So the passage in Genesis, it highlights this human problem we have with impatience.

[5 : 01] You know, have you ever been in the fast lane on the freeway and somebody in front of you, all they're doing is obeying the speed limit? Amen. Amen. And you're frustrated. You get frustrated or you've been in the supermarket line, maybe you've been frustrated there or maybe you've been to the DMV, the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Oh my. If you've ever waited in that line, you know what I'm talking about. We can be, a lot of us, you know, we can be a little bit like the race car driver who's in the second place of the last lap of 500 laps, and we feel like so much is at stake that we just have to go a little faster.

You've probably seen it if you've watched a race or you've seen the highlights on TV. Driver number two, with just half a lap to go, he gets frustrated and he bumps into the back of driver number one, and this big accident, this huge accident happens, takes out 10 cars in the lead, you know, crashing into the wall and cars flipping over and ending up in the center area in the grass.

You know, that's our problem. Right? Driver number 11 ends up crossing the finish line as number one and gets the checkered flag.

We're frustrated a lot of times because we're impatient with God. We're impatient with others. And the point of this message really this morning is that God wants us to live by faith, not by sight, knowing that he sees us and we are dependent upon his grace, not on what we can do, not on our human effort.

[6 : 45] When you try to solve a problem by taking matters into your own hand, it usually just makes matters worse. And because God the Father sees you, you don't need to try to take matters into your own hands.

And because God the Father sees you, you can live every day by faith, trusting in him that he loves you and he knows everything about you. He knows all your troubles, all your circumstances. Because your heavenly Father sees you, don't try to take matters into your own hands.

Don't take them out of God's hands. Abraham was 75 years old with no children when God called him and gave him this great promise of a multitude as his offspring.

And you can imagine every birthday that Abraham had after that, every birthday that he celebrated in this new land, he may have wondered when this promise would be fulfilled.

In chapter 15, we read that when God appeared to him in a vision and said to him, don't be afraid, Abram. I am your shield and your very great reward. He questioned God.

[7 : 50] He replied, O sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus? You have given me no children.

He says, so a servant in my household I will have to designate as my heir. And God answered him, no, this man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.

And remember what God did to reinforce the promise. He took him outside and gave him this visual picture of what he was going to do. He said, look up at the heavens and count the stars.

Abraham, if indeed you can count the stars, look at the heavens. And verse six says, Abram believed God and he credited it to him as righteousness.

God said, the stars, look at them. So shall your offspring be. And Abram believed the Lord and God declared him to be in right standing. Not because of anything Abraham could do.

[8 : 52] Not based on his human effort, but just on his trusting in what God said and what God was going to do. But 10 years is a long time, right?

10 years have gone by since Abram and Sarah have been in this new land. And he was now 85 years old. And they were both wondering what God was waiting for.

You know, maybe he was leaving the fulfillment of the promise up to their efforts and their wisdom to figure out how to make things happen. You know, maybe God helps those who help themselves.

And so Sarah comes up with her plan by means of her maidservant, Hagar. And asking a maidservant to bear a child on your behalf wasn't completely out of the ordinary.

It was actually an accepted legal custom. When a wife couldn't bear children for one reason or another, a maidservant could be taken as a second wife in order to have a family, right? This wasn't God's idea, but it was a custom.

[9 : 54] There's a lot of marriage customs today in our culture that are not God's idea, right? The problem was that God planned to bring them a son in a supernatural way.

He planned to open the womb of Sarah. And we know that bringing a child into the world in a supernatural way is something that God is famous for.

Amen? It's not a problem for him. God wasn't laying awake at night worrying about this problem of Sarah's barrenness in his time, right?

If they were patient, God was going to do what he said he was going to do. Abram and Sarah, really what they were doing was they were taking the miracle out of God's hands.

And they were putting it into their own hands. She says, it may be that I shall obtain children by her. Perhaps I can build a family through Hagar. And what was the immediate consequence?

[10 : 59] We see a lot more trouble, right? A lot more trouble came to them because of this taking matters into their own hands. Hagar began to openly despise Sarah as soon as she became pregnant.

And it wasn't just in her thoughts. The Hebrew word translated despise in the NIV and in the ESV that we read where it says she looked with contempt.

It's the same word that is used in chapter 12 in Genesis where God says, I will curse those who curse you. So Hagar was pouring on contempt.

She was pouring on curses on Sarah. God says, whoever treats you with contempt, Abraham, I will do the same. And by the way, the same is true for the Lord Jesus and his church.

Whoever treats Jesus with contempt, God will pour out his displeasure on them. And Hagar was pouring on the contempt for Sarah.

[11 : 59] And what she was doing was wrong. So naturally, Sarah appeals to Abraham, the father of the child and the one with the authority to bring about change in the relationship and the behavior.

And Sarah says, may the wrong done to me be on you. You're responsible, Abraham. Abraham, he's in the wrong, first of all, for going along with the plan to take matters into their own hands.

And he's wrong in how he responds to Sarah about Hagar. He says, okay, just do with Hagar whatever you think is best. That's real leadership, right?

They were forgetting at the moment that God sees, forgetting that God is a personal God. We have a relationship with the person of the father.

He's our heavenly father. We have a personal relationship with his Holy Spirit. We have a personal relationship with his son, Jesus. And they know father, son, and Holy Spirit.

[13 : 05] They know they're personal beings who know our troubles. The father knows every care that we have. And he wants to be brought into every decision that we make, especially those when we're troubled or we're worried, never try to take matters out of God's hands and put them into your own.

This is just another way of saying don't try to be justified by your human effort. Remember that we're justified only by grace through faith in Christ. You can't bring God's blessings or his favor through human effort.

Your acts of service are important, but they're to be done out of gratitude for all that God has already done for you, not because you think it's going to merit you any favor with him.

Because that's because of what Christ has done and all that he's promised us in the gospel. You know, Jim Crumble and I were visiting one of our church members in the Bayberry Apartments this past Sunday evening.

And we stopped to talk with one of the residents there, a gentleman who was kind enough to take some time to talk with us. And we asked him some questions about his spiritual life.

[14 : 21] And Jim likes to ask this question. He asked him, you know, if you had the opportunity to ask God one question, what would it be? And the gentleman, you know, he put his hand on his chin and he thought for a minute.

And he replied, I'd ask him, what about me? What do you, you know, how do you feel about me? And this was an interesting response.

We'd not heard that response before. So we asked him, you know, what do you mean? Talk to us some more about that. And he explained to us that he felt like he had liability insurance with God.

And he needed to take another step. He needed to do something more to get comprehensive coverage. So, you remember liability insurance is just when you have enough coverage to pay for the other guy's car in an accident.

Right? But not your own. You have to pay some more to the insurance company to get comprehensive, comprehensive in collision. They'll cover you as well in the case of an accident or a theft or a tree falls on your car or something.

[15 : 31] And this gentleman's interesting view of his relationship to God, that there was something lacking, something more that he needed to purchase in order to be fully covered.

God helps those who help themselves. Right? That's the popular but very bad theological understanding. He obviously hadn't heard much teaching on the biblical truth of justification by faith.

By faith alone. In Christ alone. By believing. Not by human effort. So, we spent some time with him. And he was gracious to let us kind of talk to him about this very important doctrine for Christians.

That we are justified by faith. And he agreed to let us pray for him. See, God wants this gentleman to understand that believing in the one he sent is the work that he requires.

Putting your faith and trust in the one that God sent for us to pay the price, the penalty for our sin, is the work that God requires. Turning away from sin and believing in Christ gets you everything that Christ has.

[16 : 44] You get it all. Right? You don't need to purchase something else. You don't get a piece of it and then it's up to you to do the rest. It gets you really a giant umbrella policy that you could call an assurance policy.

Not insurance. But we should have assurance because of the Holy Spirit that God has placed in our hearts. That teaches us. The Holy Spirit teaches us to cry out, Abba, Father.

A personal, very personal, intimate term. Like dad. A very close relationship with a father. So we, you know, we have no need of comprehensive or collision or liability or homeowners or flood or windstorm.

You know, or any of that. Any kind. You know, we have this wonderful assurance that what Christ has done for us that it's not about us. We know we're a mess. We know we need mercy.

And then we sing about that. Right? We talk about it. But oftentimes we're tempted to forget that it's all because of Christ. And we want to do something to merit his favor.

[17 : 56] Nothing can really, nothing bad can really happen to you when his eyes are on you because of the relationship you have with Christ. And this justification by faith is not dependent on your works.

It produces works. It produces good works that God has prepared for you just out of gratitude for what God has done. When you reflect enough on justification by faith alone, it makes you motivated to work, to respond to him.

And the more you believe that, the more you'll be motivated to do his good works that he's prepared in advance for you to do. And you'll less likely, you'll be less likely to try to get his approval or the approval of others through your human effort.

So where in your life do you need to believe that God the Father sees you? Because he sees you and knows you, you can trust in him by faith that he's got it.

He's taking care of it. It could be in some relationship where you're trying too hard to please others rather than trusting that you're fully pleasing to your heavenly Father because of your union with Christ.

[19 : 05] It could be that your self-effort shows up in the ways you're expecting too much from others to provide for your needs. You know, if you're married and you're expecting the level of joy and satisfaction that can only come from God, if you're expecting that from your spouse, then that can create trouble.

That can create problems and conflict. Or as a parent, if you're looking to the relationship with your children to provide for you all the joy and the hope and satisfaction that only God can provide, then you're setting yourself up.

You're taking something out of God's hands and trying to put it in your own hands. Or put it in your children's hands or your spouse's hands. You know, we could apply this to our career, to our employer, our boyfriend, or just about anything or anyone.

Good things. I mean, Sarah could apply it to her desire to have a family. That was a good desire that she had. Because God sees and knows Sarah didn't need to take matters into her own hands.

She could patiently wait by faith, trusting in God that he sees us and he knows our situation. Because your Heavenly Father sees you, you can live every day by faith that he loves you.

[20 : 29] And he knows all about your troubles, whatever is bothering you. We come to church, you know, with a mixture of joy and desire to worship and all that other stuff, right?

We got all that other stuff. You know, maybe what happened in the car on the way to church, right? Thankfully, I walk to church. I just live. I don't ride in the car with my family.

I walk by myself because I'm just two blocks away. Feel guilty, you know, driving. But you know what I'm talking about. Right? All of that stuff that we have that's going on that distracts us.

A lot of times it's because of this conflict that we are trying to put in our hands what doesn't belong in our hands. What only belongs in God's hands.

God knows all about it. He knows everything. As the scriptures show in many places, God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass. Right? Right? As Joseph told his brothers, what you meant for evil, God will turn to good.

[21 : 35] And God loves Abraham and Sarah even in their impatient unbelief. And he loves Hagar. He loves her even in her contempt of Sarah.

God shows compassion for her. In verse 7, we can see that God sends the angel of the Lord in search of Hagar who's been harshly treated. And she said, I'm out of here.

She fled from Abram and Sarah. And he found her in the wilderness on her way to her homeland of Egypt. And God sometimes asks questions that he doesn't really need a person to answer.

Right? For example, when he asked Job, where were you when I laid the earth's foundations? Didn't really expect Job to answer that question.

You know, tell me if you understand. Or when Moses said to God, you know, pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent. And what did God ask Moses?

[22 : 35] Who made your mouth? You know, in a similar way, the angel of the Lord, he meets Hagar. And he demonstrates right away to Hagar that he sees her.

And he knows all about her troubles. He calls her by name. And he asks, Hagar, servant of Sarah, where have you come from? And where are you going? He didn't really need her to answer.

I mean, he found her after all. Right? She was running away. And he knew right where she was. One writer said in writing about this, that this is the only known instance in ancient Near Eastern literature in which the deity calls a woman by name.

Hagar. Hagar. Where are you coming from? And where are you going? It's just like God in his character. Right? To establish a relationship with Hagar who's on the run.

And God just wants her to articulate what the trouble is. He knows all about it. But he wants this relationship. And Jesus does a similar thing, if you remember, with the Samaritan woman at the well.

[23 : 42] When he approaches her and asks her for a drink of water, he sees her. And he knows all about her troubles in her relationships with men. And he surprises her.

And he knows she's had five husbands. And the man she was with at the time was not her husband. Yet he has compassion on her. And he showed her mercy and grace by offering her joy and satisfaction in a reconciled relationship with God through the living water.

That he told her if she drank from it, she would never thirst again. And John says in chapter 4, he says, many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony.

He said, he told me everything I ever did, she said. So Jesus saw her and knew about all of her conflict and her troubles. And he had compassion.

He loved her. I'm running away, Hagar says, in response to the angel of the Lord. And God didn't want her to run away. You know, the child she was carrying was Abraham's child.

[24 : 54] And the Lord told her he wanted her to take the humble path and go back to Abraham and Sarah. As difficult as that might be, the messenger of God told her to return, submit herself to Sarah, to the one who had treated her harshly.

Oh, my. Difficult for Hagar to hear. But where else in God's plan of redemption do we see him asking a servant to humbly submit himself to others who didn't deserve it, who would mistreat him, who would ultimately kill the suffering servant of the Lord.

Jesus is the example of the one who humbled himself and submitted to the will of God. Jesus is our helper who helps us when we need to humble ourselves and hear what God has to say as hard as it may be.

And angel of the Lord gives Hagar the good news that God will increase her descendants so that there will be too numerous to count. In verse 10, he says, your descendants will be too numerous to count.

He announces the conception of the child. He names the child and explains the meaning of the name Ishmael. Ishmael, for the Lord has heard your misery.

[26 : 15] That's the name of Ishmael. God hears. God hears. And Hagar, he says, your child Ishmael is going to have this name. God hears you in your trouble. God sees and God hears.

And now it's Hagar, the maidservant's turn to give a name to God. This humble Egyptian servant woman is going to give a name to God that we know, that we have in Scripture.

She says, you are the God who sees me. I have seen the one who sees me. And in verse 14, the narrator adds, that is why the well was called Bir Lahai Ro.

You know what that means. In Hebrew, it means the well of the living one who sees me. So there's a place named after what happened with this interaction with Hagar and the angel of the Lord, where God hears her and sees her and meets her, meets her need.

And if you read on in Genesis, there's a lot more drama to come that involves Abraham and Sarah and Hagar and Ishmael and Isaac, along with the many other messed up children of God.

[27 : 31] All God's messed up children in Scripture, as they struggle to live by faith in the God who sees us. God's people continue to struggle today, trying to take matters into our own hands.

We see that all throughout Scripture, folks struggling with their responsibility of faithfulness and loyal love to God, what he expects because of what he has done for us.

Because of his faithfulness and his love for us in Christ. He expects that loyal love in return. And only one of Abraham's descendants would love and obey God completely with a perfect record, right?

Only one. Only Jesus, our Savior and King, would live in complete faith and dependence on the Father that he could accomplish all of God's will for us.

Amen? Amen. Amen. We look to Jesus as our example and our helper. And God wants you to remember that he graciously sent his messenger, the Holy Spirit, to find you in your wilderness, right?

[28 : 39] That desolate place of hopelessness and misery in your bondage to sin, even if you don't remember a time. This is wonderful for children who don't remember a time that they didn't know Jesus because they were raised up in church and in the home.

But there's a time where God still rescues that child from the hold that sin has on them. And they come to assurance and an understanding that God is their God.

He sees them personally. It's not just about the church that they were brought up in or the family that they were brought up in, their parents. But they have to own it, right? Each one of us have to own this personal relationship with God.

And he wants you to understand that he saw you when you were running away from him, anxious and afraid and prideful. And he's the one who brought you into his place of safety and blessing and has promised you a wonderful future.

Regardless of the circumstances in your life today, whether you're at complete peace, maybe you're the one person in here that's at complete peace with the world and your life.

[29 : 52] Or you could be like most of us in the midst of some kind of trouble and conflict. Maybe the worst kind of trouble and conflict that you're facing.

But you can trust God. You can trust him by faith because you know that he sees you. And he understands. He is personal. And he wants a relationship with you.

And he wants every decision to be brought before him. And he sees your circumstances, your job, your family, your neighbors, where you live, everything. And because he sees you, you can live every day by faith because he loves you and he knows everything.

He's got it. God sees my dear brother-in-law, Pastor Mike McCrum. He's going into the fourth week in the hospital. My wife's brother.

That was supposed to be five days in the hospital. But had a certain little surgery and everything that could go wrong went wrong with Mike's.

[30 : 54] And now he's a month in the hospital. We visited him in the hospital near Atlanta in week two. And we thought at that time, you know, he may die because it was really serious.

But God sees this dear man. God sees Mike. And he loves him and his family. And he's present with him in that hospital room.

And by his mercy, he seems to be making a little progress day by day. Hopefully he's going to be released from the hospital and go to rehab. He might be in rehab for some time. We don't know what a day brings forth.

We're just going in for a little surgery. And everything can go south. In God's perfect plan. But he still sees.

He still understands. And he still loves us. And he knows our trouble. And we can trust him. Our father sees all of us at New City Fellowship.

[31 : 51] You know, our church is not unlike a hospital ward. In a way. Right? There are different degrees of care needed. Different diagnoses. But we all need heart surgery.

To one degree or another. No one's heart is at perfect peace. We're all like Martha to some degree. Anxious and troubled about something.

We all need the motivation of Mary who chose the better portion, Jesus said. Just to be with him. To enjoy fellowship. To humbly sit at his feet and learn from him. And Jesus says to us.

Come to me all who are weary and burdened. He says that to our whole church. To New City Fellowship. And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

For I am gentle and humble in heart. And you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Amen.

[32 : 50] And we give God thanks. As we prepare now for taking part in the supper. That Jesus gave to us. Let's just take a few moments.

Why don't we just take a few quiet moments. Of personal prayer and reflection. On all the benefits that we enjoyed. Because of our union. With Christ. Because of our being justified.

By grace through faith alone. Because of his suffering and death. On the cross. Amen.
Amen.