

Mother's Day
The God Who Sees - Genesis 16:1-15; 21:8-20
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – May 9th, 2021

Intro:

- Mother's Day can be an emotional day for many people. For some, it brings great joy in being celebrated and honored by children and grandchildren. For some, it brings great sorrow over children lost, or children never held, or children who never were. For some, it brings great grief from the strains and pains of relationships that have been difficult or a mother who is no longer with us. And some of you moms are just tired and in need of strength and encouragement.
- Not all of us are mothers, and some for obvious reasons, like being male, but we were all once children, and children like to be watched. I bet you said to your mom, "Hey, mom, watch this! Look what I can do! Look at me!" And your mothers looked every time, no matter what weird thing you were doing (and you know you did some weird things). We all know what that's like as a child, wanting to be seen by our moms.
- Many of you have also been a mom who wonders if she is ever seen—because there comes the point as a mom where you begin to think you are invisible. Nicole Johnson has written an insightful article called "I Am Invisible," that gives words to what many moms feel and I am going to read a part of it:

It all began to make sense—the blank stares, the lack of response, the way one of the kids will walk into the room while I am on the phone and ask to be taken to the store. And inside I am thinking, Can't you see? I am on the phone. Obviously not. No one can see if I am on the phone or cooking or sweeping the floor or even standing on my head in the corner because no one can see me at all. I am invisible.

Some days I am only a pair of hands, nothing more. 'Can you fix this? Can you tie this? Can you open this?' Some days I am not a pair of hands; I am not even a human being; I am a clock to ask, 'What time is it?' I am a satellite guide to answer, 'What number is the Disney Channel?' I am a taxi driver — pick me up at 5:30, don't be late!

I was certain that these were the hands that once held books and the eyes that studied history and the mind that graduated with high honors. But now they had all disappeared into the peanut butter never to be seen again. She's going, she's going, she's gone. <http://icantbelievevmylife.blogspot.com/2007/09/i-am-invisible-by-nicole-johnson.html>

- I don't know if you feel that way today, but I bet all of us have felt that way at different points in our lives. This morning we are going to look at a biblical account of a mother who I imagine felt invisible and unknown, and from her story, we will learn things about ourselves and things about God, and we will all be strengthened and encouraged by the God who sees us. Please open up your bibles to Genesis 16:1-15.

Gen 16:1–16 (NIV)

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

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. 3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian servant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. 4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

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

6 "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

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

"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

9 Then the angel of the Lord told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." 10 The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count."

11 The 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."

13 She 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." 14 That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

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

Feeling unknown and unseen

- In this story, we meet a mother, Hagar. She is an immigrant from Egypt and probably has no sense of belonging as she has lost connection with her family and place of origin. She, in this account, is running away from a household where her body has been used to produce offspring for an infertile couple.

- Tragically, like many people, Hagar is unknown, unseen, and mistreated. She is trapped in a system where she feels as though she is invisible, like a “non-person.” She has no rights, dignity, freedom, or choice, and she has had enough. It is awfully hard to be a nobody with no name. Moses, the human author of Genesis, states her name (Hagar), but Abram and Sarai never call her by her name in the passage. She is called “my servant” or “the Egyptian.” Sarai and Abram perhaps did not really see Hagar as a person. She was there to serve a purpose, to sever them in ways they saw fit.
- But there is a person in this story who calls her by name; it is God Himself. He calls her by name in verse eight. And not only does He know her name, but He knows so very much more. From this interaction, she gained what she needed to continue to move forward in His strength, in His plan. Out of this horrendous situation for her, God speaks to her God is speaking to you today as well. Let’s listen to what He says so that we can gain strength and encouragement as well.

Understand that God sees you

- *The Lord pursues you (v.7)* The Angel of the Lord found Hagar – she was not pursuing God, but God pursued her. She was running away from her problems, but God was running to meet her there. Sometimes we don’t even have the strength to go after Him, but the good news is that He comes after us.
- *The Lord calls you by name (v.7-8)* He calls her by name, “Hagar.” She is not some unnamed servant, someone who is not worthy even of being called by name. Not only does He know your name, He truly sees you. He knows everything about you, from the exact number of hairs you have to everything you’ve thought and everything that’s in your heart. You are not a “nobody” to Him.

1 Sam 16:7b ESV

For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

- *The Lord knows where you are (v.7)* – and this specific – you have not fallen off the map to God. You are not forgotten, and there is nowhere you can go that He is not there.

Ps 139:7-12 NIV

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," 12 even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Everywhere you go, there He is.

- *The Lord knows what is* (v.8) “Hagar, servant of Sarai” – He knows what is. He knows your circumstances. He knows everything that is going on. He sees it all and understands it all, far better than anyone of us ever will. When the Lord asks you a question, He is not looking for information; He wants you to think about something (“where have you come from, and where are you going?”). Really think about where you have come from and what is truly happening, and then tell me where you are going, as in what are you doing, what do you want, and do you know where you are going? You think you know what to do and what is best for you?
- *The Lord knows what to do* (v. 9) – and when He tells you to do something, it is right. It’s not always easy, but when you follow His will, He will help you to do it.
- *The Lord knows what will be* (v. 10-12) His advice is not just based on who you are or your circumstances. He knows the future. He knows who you are and what will happen, and He sees the future for what it is. He will guide you.

Ps 139:16 NIV

Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

- *The Lord sees you, trust in Him* You are not forgotten. You are not abandoned. His plan continues to play out, and He will never leave you or forsake you. His ways are best (notice I did not say easy). He will be with you. He will reward you, and He will help you.

Understand that God helps you

- Having this interaction with God gave Hagar, the unnamed, invisible servant, the courage and strength to go back and do as the Lord had directed. But the story was not over. She came to a very difficult time again after several years had passed.

Gen 21:8–16 NIV

The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. 9 But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, 10 and she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. 12 But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. 13 I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring.”

14 Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.

15 When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there, she began to sob.

- I don't know if you with your children have ever gotten to the end of your resources. You can't do it anymore. You can't be the mom to the child. You can't provide what the child needs. There is no more strength, no more resources, and you can't go on. All you can do is sit there and cry. That's this situation.
- But all hope is not lost; the God who sees, the God who hears, will come to your aid.

Gen 21:17-21 NIV

God 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."

19 Then 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.

20 God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. 21 While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

- Do not be afraid; you are not abandoned. The Lord is your helper. **Isaiah 41:13 For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."** There is a future in the love of the Lord; His plan is not lost even though you may have been abandoned, even though you are at the end of everything. He will take you by the hand, and He will help you.
- Then God opened her eyes so that she could see His provision. I would encourage all of you, especially if you are at the end of your rope, to cry out to God. He will open your eyes to the help that He has provided for you so that you can go on.

Conclusion

Heb 4:16 ESV

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- You are not invisible, and neither is God. That's what Hagar discovered when she fled into the desert. He sees me; he knows my name.
- Just because you can't see God doesn't mean that He is not there. Just because you think He is not there doesn't mean He doesn't see you. Just because you can't see Him doing anything immediately does not mean He is not doing something. To be seen does not mean you don't fall, but He will help you to get back up. Falling is part of life. God doesn't stop everything that hurts us. But He will help heal us, and He will never abandon us.
- God sees you, now **"fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."** (Heb 12:2-3 NIV)