*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 1 – August 6

*Walking with Abraham*

**Monday, August 1 Genesis 20:1-2** *“She is my sister”*

 Good grief! Here we are again! Abraham, traveling into a region on the outskirts of Canaan, presents Sarah as his sister to King Abimelech. Having done the same thing in Egypt in chapter 19, one might draw the conclusion that Abraham is habitual in his desire to deceive those around him. Perhaps, this conclusion is overly critical. It is more likely that when faced with a situation that is uncomfortable and potentially dangerous, Abraham reverts to a pattern of behavior that he believes will keep him safe and secure.

 Sound familiar? We often do the same. If we examine our lives, we are likely to identify our own patterns of self-preservation. We lie and gossip. We withdraw from those who offer their help. We surround ourselves with material possessions aimed at hiding the hurt in our hearts. Regardless of its form, all acts of self-preservation have one thing in common: they deny God’s promises. Just as God had promised to be Abraham’s God, he promises to be ours. Our preservation is rooted in this promise. We are secure in the Lord. We need not deceive others or ourselves; we need only to hold tightly to the One who protects us.

*Lord, let me find my preservation in you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 2 Genesis 20:3-7**

*“…it was I who kept you from sinning against me”*

 Having been deceived by Abraham and Sarah, King Abimelech is approached by the Lord in a dream and told to return Sarah to her husband or face destruction. Abimelech is understandably concerned and confused. Pleading with the Lord, he argues his innocence: “I did this in the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands.” In other words, “My intentions were pure.”

 We often approach the Lord and appeal to our intentions. We say things like, “God, I was only trying to help” or “I didn’t know” or “If I hadn’t done anything, then…” While our intentions may be good, we remain, at the end of the day, sinners and broken people. Our intentions rarely result in obedience.

 Thankfully, we serve a God who knows are sinfulness, and has kept us righteous before him. Like Abimelech, the Lord saves us from ourselves. Through his Son, he redeems and calls us his own. All this is accomplished by him. He is the only One who saves.

*Lord, thank you for saving me from myself. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 3 Genesis 20:8-10**

*“What have you done to us?”*

 Abimelech confronts Abraham and asks a question we often find ourselves wondering: “Why?” It is painful to be wronged by those around us. We might consider someone a friend only to have them speak to another behind our back. Regardless of the circumstances, we want to understand what motivates others in their brokenness.

 While this desire for understanding is common to us all, the truth is not overly complicated: people do broken things because they are broken people. Sin affects us all. We all are touched by it, each one of us making choices that deceive and impact others. Rather than asking the “Why?” question, perhaps we would be better served by asking, “How? How can I help point those around me to the grace and love of Jesus Christ?” When we are harmed, our best course of action is to show others that this is not the only way. Though narrow, the way of Jesus leads to truth and friendship. Our way leads to deception and mistrust.

*Lord, when hurt, help me to be a witness to your love and mercy. Amen.*

 *DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 25 – July 30

*Walking with Abraham*

**Thursday, August 4 Genesis 20:11-13**

*“Besides, she is indeed my sister”*

 When confronted by Abimelech, Abraham begins to justify his actions. Embarking on a convoluted definition of his relationship with Sarah, Abraham attempts to avoid the rightful responsibility of owning his mistakes. In other words, Abraham is unwilling to confess his sin.

 Each Sunday in our worship together, we acknowledge before the Lord that we have sinned. Our confession of prayer is a time of self-reflection in which we admit our faults before the Lord and seek to live the new life established in Christ. Because our confession acknowledges the gift of mercy won by Christ on the cross, there is no need to justify ourselves. Doing so only casts a shadow of doubt on the sufficiency of the cross. When we try to justify ourselves, we simultaneously deny the justification of the saving death of Christ.

 The only justification we need comes from Jesus. Self-justification is impossible and pointless. Jesus has paid it all. We need not waste our time trying to prove to others or ourselves that we are deserving of mercy; we are not. However, God offers it to us out of the abundance of his love rooted in Jesus Christ.

*Lord, thank you for justifying me through the cross. Amen.*

**Friday, August 5 Genesis 20:14-18**

*“My land is before you; settle where it pleases you”*

 Abimelech has every reason to be angry with Abraham. If he violently drove Abraham and Sarah away, could we blame him? He has been deceived and his house nearly destroyed. We might expect him to deal harshly with Abraham and treat him as an enemy.

 He does not. Instead, Abimelech showers Abraham and Sarah with gifts. He offers them the choice of his land. In all, he treats them as honored friends. Abimelech demonstrates an essential Christian virtue: forgiveness. Abimelech is generous in his forgiveness towards those who have wronged him.

 This generosity is not easy. When we are wronged by others, our natural reaction is to drive them out. We want them to hurt as we have; we want them to know our pain. In contrast, forgiveness invites others into the freedom we have been given in Christ. While the world demands an eye for an eye, the way of Christ invites us to turn our cheek in love.

*Lord, help me to be generous in my forgiveness of others. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 6 James 3:17-18**

*“And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace”*

 Genesis 20 is a testimony to God’s faithfulness to Abraham through King Abimelech. In the face of Abraham’s deception, Abimelech shows mercy and lavishes Abraham and Sarah with gifts. As noted yesterday, he is generous in his forgiveness. Abimelech models for us what it means to witness to Jesus Christ in our interactions with others.

 James 3:17-18 states that a life lived in the vein of Abimelech is a life of wisdom that comes from the Lord. This life is “pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.” In other words, this life is witness to the world of the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Because Christ is first merciful, peaceable, gentle, and pure towards us, we are called to be the same toward others. In doing so, we live as Abimelech; we embrace a broken world with the same love shown to us by the Lord. As you seek to witness to Christ, allow the example of Abimelech to provide you with a roadmap to mercy. His path is not his own; it flows from our loving God.

*Lord, let me run to you and find my home in your grace. Amen.*