*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 8 – August 13

*Walking with Abraham*

**Monday, August 8 Genesis 21:1-7**

*“The Lord kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised”*

 God has kept his promise to Abraham and Sarah: Isaac is born. I can only imagine the overwhelming emotion they must have felt as they held their baby boy for the first time. Looking back on their journey, we see so many opportunities for doubt and distress. Each time that God voiced his promise to Abraham and Sarah, they responded with words and actions that suggested an underlying reticence to fully believe that God would bring to pass what he had promised.

 There are times in our lives when we also doubt that God will fulfill what he has promised us. We look around and feel that God has forgotten us, abandoned us to the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.” We glance at our watches, asking, “Why hasn’t the Lord acted yet?”

 In verse 2, we read, “This happened at just the time God had said it would.” There are times in our lives when we would like God to act immediately. We have a schedule to keep! The truth is that our timing is not the Lord’s. While we see a twenty-four hours on a watch face, the Lord sees eternity. In his time, he has faithfully kept every promise to us.

*Lord, let me trust your timing. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 9 Genesis 21:8-11**

*“Get rid of that slave woman and her son”*

 Many have difficulty walking away from the past. Though God has shown her great faithfulness by giving her a son, Sarah’s guilt and shame are too great; she demands that Hagar and Ishmael be taken away. Once again, Abraham is given the opportunity to do what is right, but he does not. Despite God’s blessing, Abraham and Sarah choose to treat Hagar and Ishmael in a manner unbecoming those who have been shown great mercy and love.

 As you examine your own life, are their circumstances in which you have acted out of shame and guilt? Are there people in your life who deserve to be offered the same mercy and love that the Lord has shown you? There are, of course, circumstances in which space and time are necessary for healing; however, we are also called to witness to the grace that the Lord has given to each of us. We are to be models of the good news won on the cross. As we feast and celebrate at the Lord’s table, we must make room for all including those who we have been at odds with in the past. We were once enemies of God, and he welcomed us.

*Lord, help me to welcome others as you have welcomed me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 10 Genesis 21:12-14**

*“Do not be upset over the boy and your servant?”*

 To his credit, Abraham is upset at Sarah’s command to take Hagar and Ishmael away. Ishmael is his son. Abraham’s conscience is heavy with the thought that he must drive away a part of his family, a part that he and Sarah share responsibility for introducing. What will happen to them? How will they survive?

 In verse 13, the Lord says to Abraham, “But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar’s son because he is your son, too.” While Abraham and Sarah may discard Hagar and Ishmael, the Lord will not. In fact, the Lord is actively redeeming a broken situation. He will care for the two, engrafting Ishmael into the promise that he has made to Abraham.

 The Lord’s faithfulness extends beyond our plain of view. His grace seeks out all who are lost, and in his love, they find their rest. We will encounter individuals in our lives that are in distress. We will ask, “Lord, what will happen to them?” God’s response is revealed in Jesus Christ: the Lord redeems!

*I will trust in your redeeming love for others. Amen.*

 *DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 8 – August 13

*Walking with Abraham*

**Thursday, August 11 Genesis 21:15-21**

*“Do not be afraid!”*

 As far as she is concerned, Hagar’s story has come to an end. Wandering aimlessly in the wilderness, she has run out of food and water. Like so many, Hagar has lost hope. In anguish, she takes Ishmael and places him a distance away so that she doesn’t have to hear the bitter cries of her dying son.

 Unfortunately, Hagar’s story is like so many. We all know people who have lost hope. Like Hagar, they have stopped wandering. They no longer can muster the strength or energy to move on. It is simply easier to begin the sad process of death, of allowing one’s heart to accept the lie that life has no meaning.

 As Hagar weeps, the Lord comes to her with a word of hope: “Do not be afraid.” This word is for all of us. In Jesus Christ, the Lord has heard our cries and responded by becoming one of us, taking our suffering and sin upon himself, and conquering death on our behalf. When we lose hope, he is there to comfort us, assuring us of his love.

*Lord, thank you for giving hope to the hopeless. Amen.*

**Friday, August 12 Genesis 21:22-24**

*“I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me”*

 If I had the authority (I don’t!) to add a tenth fruit of the Spirit to Galatians 5, it would be *loyalty*. Having grown up in a small town, loyalty has always been important to me. Now, people have different definitions of loyalty. One might say that loyalty means to agree and stand with someone no matter the circumstances. I disagree. Loyalty is not blind assent. True loyalty is working for the good of someone regardless of whether they are deserving of it or not. Abraham is not deserving of Abimelech’s loyalty. Yet, here he is, offering his friendship to Abraham despite having been deceived by him in chapter 20.

 The Lord has been loyal to us. He has worked for our good despite the obvious fact that are undeserving of it. The Lord’s loyalty knows no limits. Like a shepherd seeking a lost lamb, the Lord is loyal in his pursuit of our hearts. He demonstrates true loyalty: loyalty that redeems and builds up its recipient. As followers of Christ, our loyalty ought to reflect his. While rejecting blind assent, let us embrace a loyalty to others that seeks their good.

*Lord, let me show true loyalty to others. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 13 Genesis 21:25-34**

*“…they made a treaty”*

 The story of the friendship between Abraham and Abimelech is one of my favorites in Scripture. Their relationship was not perfect. In fact, there were numerous moments in which it appeared that they would become enemies. However, their desire to seek peace, encouraged by the Lord’s grace, allowed the two leaders to come to an understanding of one another. This understanding culminates in the covenant established between them in verse 27.

 We have already established the importance of covenant to Abraham’s story. Here at the end of chapter 21, we see this concept come full circle. The covenant between God and Abraham leads to the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech. In other words, when we pursue a right relationship with God, we are then able to establish right relationships with others. The two go hand-in-hand. If we follow Christ, we will love others. As God establishes peace with us, we share that peace with the world.

*Lord, let your covenant transform my relationship with others. Amen.*