

Thought for Sunday 14th March 2021 Mothering Sunday

Pastor Gordon Hamilton

Read Genesis 20:1-18 This chapter gives us a dilemma, and brings a repeat of what happened in chapter 12, you may remember on January 10th we looked at Abram going to Egypt, and as in this chapter, Abraham asked Sarah to say she was his sister, believing he would be treated better if the Egyptians accepted that scenario. Now Abraham repeats the same suggestion with king Abimelech. You really would think that Abraham would have learned his lesson in Egypt. We have to remember that there was an element of truth in what Abraham said, because in verse 12 it says; *'she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife.'* So Sarah, as well as being his wife was his step sister. We know nowadays that in our laws, this wouldn't have been allowed to happen, but there weren't the same laws around in those day, so we cannot be judgemental in that way. It appears God wasn't impressed with the situation. You may remember that in chapter 12:17 *'God inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abraham's wife Sarah.'* And God is not impressed this time, verse 18; *'God had stricken all the women with barrenness to punish Abimelech for taking Abraham's wife.'* It appears that king Abimelech hadn't slept with Sarah but he had taken her as a wife, which was one up on a concubine. 20:3 tells us; *'God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, 'You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.'* And the same as Pharaoh in chapter 12, we see Abimelech responding to God, verse 5; *'Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister,' and didn't she also say, 'He is my brother'? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.'* You have to feel for Abimelech, he didn't believe that he was doing anything wrong. I believe the lesson we have to take from these two passages is we must not allow other people to compromise themselves because we haven't been totally honest with them. We could say that Abraham didn't lie, but he didn't tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. He only said what he felt would be beneficial to him. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 6:12, Paul writes; *'I have the right to do anything,' you say – but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything' – but I will not be mastered by anything.'* Paul says very similarly four chapters later, in 10:23; *'I have the right to do anything,' you say – but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything' – but not everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.'* As Christians, as people who should have some understanding of God's will, we have a responsibility to always do and say the right thing. I have shared this before, but many years ago, soon after I had come to a real recognition of Jesus as my Lord and Saviour, I was working in an office and something happened, I don't remember what, but no excuses, in frustration I let out an expletive !*!* and one of the managers said *'I thought you were a Christian Gordon!'* I just wanted the ground to open up and swallow me. I'm sure we have all had situations where we have felt that way for one reason or another. In verse 11 Abraham says; *'I said to myself, there is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.'* Whereas Abraham was implying that there was no fear of God among Abimelech's people, having done what he did once in Egypt, and in a strange way been blessed, 12:20 tells us Pharaoh sent Abraham away with everything he had, it hadn't cost him anything, and he had been fed while a famine was ongoing. Here in chapter 20 we see Abraham isn't just sent on his way with everything he had, verse 14 tells us; *'Then Abimelech brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah his wife to him. And Abimelech said, 'My land is before you; live wherever you like.' To Sarah he said, 'I am giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely*

vindicated.’ The problem we have here is that not telling the truth could be implied as an okay thing to do if it gets you off the hook, so to speak. I believe that Jesus says otherwise in the Sermon on the Mount, **Matthew 5:33-37 read...** I believe Jesus is saying we only speak the truth so that people are never given a reason to doubt. So as well as getting away Scott free, it is as if Abraham is being rewarded. At least Abraham does something in return; ‘*Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again, for the Lord had kept all the women in Abimelech’s household from conceiving because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.*’ For Abimelech, this was a lesson learned. In chapter 26, after Abraham is dead, Isaac repeats the same scenario with Abimelech saying that Rebekah is his sister and not his wife and in 26:10 we read; ‘*Then Abimelech said to Isaac, ‘What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.’* so although Abimelech wasn’t a Jew but was a Philistine, God still used him to bring a challenge to both Abraham and Isaac. It is not always a Christian minister, or even a Christian who can challenge us about our behaviour. God uses different people to discipline us. we have to remember that there is no ‘tine off’ when you are a Christian. The way you live your life will be judged by everyone you come into contact with. Today is Mothering Sunday, a day that began as a day when we would go to our mother church. A day that today has been taken over, as many Christian festivals have been, by our secular society. Nowadays it is about remembering our mum’s, and where appropriate sending a card or something. Let’s remember, people will forget what you said, they will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. So on this Mothering Sunday, let us make people feel wanted, let’s make them feel loved, not only by us but by God. Remember; ‘*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*’ Amen.

God so loved this whole world
That He gave His only Son,
And if we will cleave to Him we’ll not perish:
But we’ll have eternal life and we’ll never be condemned,
For God’s promises are Yes and Amen!

Yeah, yeah, yeah! (x5)
Yeah, yeah, yeah and Amen!

Though we walk through dark days,
Where the earth and heavens shake,
Through the valley of despair He is with us.
Never giving up on us, Faithful and forever friend,
For God’s promises are Yes and Amen!

Yeah, yeah, yeah...

Through the cross we are saved,
In the blood we put our faith,
For there is no other way into heaven.
Jesus conquered death and hell,
Promised to return again,

Yeah, yeah, yeah...