

Sunday Morning Message

January 6, 2024

Waiting on the Will of God

Text – Genesis 21:1 - 7

Congregational Reading – Genesis 21:1 - 7

Introduction

Waiting – we all hate to wait. We hate waiting on a long line at the grocery store. Or how about waiting at Motor Vehicle. Or perhaps maybe worst of all is waiting in those long lines at a place like Disney World. It seems insane to wait for more than an hour sometimes for a ride that is only going to last for a few minutes.

And then there are the longer waits in life. Waiting for Christmas to finally arrive when you are a child; or for summer vacation to get there.

Then when we get older and get married and finally purchase a house, it can take several months to finally move in.

At times it seems that life is flying by, but when we are waiting on something good to happen, life often seems to move very slowly.

Illustrate – As a church, we have been waiting for almost fifteen years to build and move into this building addition. First, it was doing the quick fix of adding to the auditorium; then it was paying that off and raising money for the new building; then it was planning and approvals; then it was Covid-19; now it's just waiting for it to be finished.

Perhaps nothing is more frustrating, however, than for a married couple who desires to have a child to wait. Abraham and Sarah were in that situation and for many years, they were sure that they would never have a child at all, but then came God's promise. But it still took twenty-five years for God to finally fulfill His promise.

Transition – Today we will be looking at several passages of Scripture in the Book of Genesis that show us that we will often have to wait patiently for God to fulfill His perfect will for our lives.

Read the text:

“1 And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2 For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. 6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. 7 And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham,

that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age.” (Genesis 21:1-7)

God had been promising Abraham that he would give him a son for a long time. Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left Haran, after his father Terah died. At that time God had promised Abram that He would make of him a great nation and when he arrived in Canaan, God promised that He would give Abram’s “seed” the land (Read Genesis 12:1 - 8). Note – God will not change Abram’s name to Abraham until chapter 17.

God reaffirmed the promise in Genesis 13 after Lot had departed from him and there He promises Abram that He would make his seed as “the dust of the earth” (Read Genesis 13:14 – 16). God reminded Abraham of the promise again after Abram rescued Lot from the four kings who attacked Sodom, and there we are told that Abraham believed the promise:

"1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. 2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:1-6)

God keeps promising that Abram will have a child, but a lot of time is going by and nothing seems to be happening. This is where we tend to doubt what God said or we try to figure out a way to manipulate the system so that we can make it happen for ourselves. Abram and Sarai do just that and get out of the will of God by trying to make God’s will happen by allowing Abram to sleep with Sarai’s Egyptian handmaid Hagar, which resulted in the birth of Ismael (Read Genesis 16).

Abram was eighty-six at this time, which was twenty-one years after God had originally promised him a son. I am sure Abram and Sarai thought that God surely was not going to give them a child through Sarai as she was beyond the normal child-bearing years. She would have been seventy-six at this time. So, they figured that God must have meant that a surrogate mother would give Abram the promised “seed.”

Practical Point – Make sure that you have clarity from God before you make any major decisions. Do not just assume that you know what God wants. God will clearly reveal His precise will to you through the Word of God, prayer, godly counsel, and often – waiting on the Lord!

In Genesis 17, when Abram is ninety-nine, God reaffirms that Abram will have a son through Sarai. By the way, it is here in this chapter that God changes Abram's name to Abraham, meaning "father of many nations," and Sarai's name to Sarah, meaning "princess." Abraham laughs when God verifies this because it would surely be miraculous for Sarah to bear children at her age and after she had been barren. I think that Abraham might have been a little upset about the fact that God was not considering Ishmael to be part of His promise (Read Genesis 17:1 – 8; 15 - 22).

In Genesis 18, God appears to Abraham again with two angels, and this time has dinner with him. Here God once again reaffirms his promise regarding Sarah bearing a child, and this time it is Sarah that laughs. God rebukes her for being faithless and Sarah denies that she laughed, but the Lord obviously knew even the secret thoughts of Sarah's heart (Read Genesis 18:1 – 15).

In our passage today in Genesis 21, Abraham and Sarah finally receive the long-awaited child of promise, Isaac. It was just twenty-five years after God had originally promised him. Abraham was now one hundred years old, and Sarah was ninety-one.

Illustrate – David was anointed by God to be the king over Israel, but it took twenty years for the whole congregation of Israel to finally call Him to be the pastor. There were times in the middle of that waiting period that David could have tried to force God's will and make it happen sooner. Remember, he had the opportunity and the justification on two occasions to kill his predecessor King Saul, but he did not do it. What did he do. He waited for God to do what he promised that He would do.

Illustrate – Abraham never did personally receive the land that God promised him, but he did receive it through his seed; through his children; thorough the nation of Israel:

"8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to

have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

(Hebrews 11:8-16)

Here is my thought. God rarely operates on our timetable. Sometimes we expect immediate blessing from the Lord and instantaneous answers to our prayers, but God does not often work that way. I have been a pastor here at Jersey Shore for twenty-two years now. I honestly expected God to move a lot faster than he did in the ministry here. I thought we would have had thousands of people and many large buildings by now, but it did not work that way, and it probably will never happen as I anticipated. God is doing what He wants to do, and He is doing it in His time. We just must be faithful to keep doing what God has called us to do and allow Him to bring the increase when and if He is ready. I have discovered that the Christian life, and particular the ministry, is not about the short-term but instead about the long haul. God has blessed and is continuing and will continue to bless in His time.

Twenty-two years ago, God and this congregation called me to be the pastor of Jersey Shore Baptist Church. God miraculously revealed His plan to both me and Pastor Owens. There have been times in that twenty-two years that I have wanted to quit and move on to something else. I am sure that there have been times when some of you have wanted me to move on, but God has not changed His plan. He wants me to stay here and move forward with what he has called me to do.

How about you? Had you been waiting for God to do something for a long time and have since given up hope. Unless God has revealed to you a change of plans, just keep praying and keep serving, and be patient as you wait for God to do His will.

Concluding Thoughts

Illustrate – Jesus came when the time was just right:

"4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Galatians 4:4-5)

Illustrate – Jesus will come back when the time is just right:

"3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the

same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:3-9)

If you are not saved, don't wait – *"... now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation."* Do not put off salvation. Trust Christ today. You are not guaranteed tomorrow.

If you are saved, be patient and wait. God will keep his promises and perform His will.

1. Are you in the place of God's will with the people of God's will doing what God has called you to do?

If you are not, then you need to seek God's will for your life through the Bible, through prayer, and through godly counsel.

If you are where God wants you to be doing what He has called you to do, then just keep doing it.

Illustrate – **Pastor Clark** said to me when I got here to Galloway, "Bloom where you are planted." What he meant was that God called me to serve here in Galloway, and unless He clearly reveals that He wants me to go somewhere else, then I should just stay here and continue doing what He has called me to do.

"29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Romans 11:29)

2. If you have been praying for God to do something in your life and it seems like He is taking forever to answer that prayer, keep praying and keep waiting.

Over and over again in the Scripture we see the phrase "appointed time" or "time appointed," meaning God has a plan and He is working according to His plan and His timetable. And when the time is right, He will do what He plans to do. That is exactly what the Scripture meant in our text.

"2 For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him." (Genesis 21:2)

God rarely moves on our timetable. Don't give up on God.

Some of you have been waiting for God to do something. Don't quit. Stay faithful to the Lord. Keep doing what you know the Lord wants you to do while you are waiting.

Stay in your Bible.

Stay in your prayer closet.

Stay in church.

Stay in the place that God has called you to serve. Keep serving in the ministry that God has called you to.

"31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

(Isaiah 40:31)

It is interesting that the word “wait” here has the idea of patience and longsuffering, but also the idea of waiting on someone like a waiter at a restaurant. That’s what God wants us to do. Be patient and keep serving.

But remember, it is not about you. God does not live to satisfy your every desire, but you live to fulfil His will. You are part of His big plan. It is not the other way around. Sometimes we think that God exists just to do what I want Him to do.