

Land Between 3

We are busy with a series entitled, The Land Between.

- In response to their cries of help
- God called the Israelites out of Egypt into the Promised Land.

They were supposed to move from green-space to green-space.

- But now, two years in, they are still stuck in the desert.
- Stuck in the Land Between.

The first week we looked at what we could learn about them?

- ...

Second week, what we can learn about Moses.

- ...

Today we are going to take a look at what we can learn about God.

But, let us first back up a bit in our story ...

- And look at their forefather Abram and his Wife Sarai.

Genesis 12:1–3 ¹ The Lord had said to Abram, (a 75-year-old childless man) "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

² "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Although you are 75 years old and your wife is 65

- And you guys have no children.
- I am going to bless you
- And I am going to make you into a great nation.
- And the whole world will be blessed through you.

That sounds wonderful.

- Sarai, I've got some amazing news.
- God appeared to me and said we are going to have a baby.
- We are going to become a great nation.
- And the whole world will be blessed through us.

They are jumping up and down, dancing in the field.

- A month passes ... A year passes ...
- Years pass and there is no baby

Genesis 16:1–5 ¹ Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children.

It seems to her that God is not coming through

- So she decides to take matters into her own hands.
- And comes up with a brilliant plan.
- What to do? What to do?

She had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; ² so she said to Abram... (Wait for it ... Wait for it ...)

"The Lord has kept me from having children. (mmm ... mmm)

Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her."

Ok, that is one way to do it.

- So, how do you think Abram responded to it?

Genesis 16:3 Abram said, "Sweetie, my heart goes out to you. I know your disappointment and longing and I feel your pain. I know it has been 10 years and this has been incredibly hard on both of us.

But, I do believe that God has plan and that he will be faithful to his promise. So, as difficult as this is for us, we have to put our trust in him and not try to take matters into our own hands."

Unfortunately, not... Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

- He agreed!

³ So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

- NO!!!!

⁴ He slept with Hagar, and she became pregnant.

Now, how do you think that is going to work out?

- High fives all around?
- One happy family?

When she (Hagar) realized that she was pregnant, she treated her mistress with contempt. (HCSB)

Previously she was but a slave.

- Now she would be the mother of Abram's child.

- This elevated her to a higher status than Sarai.
- And she was going to use it to her advantage.
- So, she started treating Sarai with contempt.

v.5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "Honey, I am so sorry about his mess. It was a stupid and faithless idea for me to tell you to go and sleep with her. I should have trusted God, but I didn't.

Now all of us are suffering the consequences. I am so sorry that I dragged you into my faithlessness. And now you, me and Hagar are all paying the price.

I am going to talk to Hagar, apologize to her for dragging her into this mess And see how we can work things out.

NO, NO, NO!!!!

Genesis 16:5 ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "YOU are responsible for my suffering!

I put my slave in your arms, and ever since she saw that she was pregnant, she has treated me with contempt. May the Lord judge between me and you." (HCSB)

And Abraham said, Hhhuuu?

- Only kidding...

Genesis 16:5 And Abram said, "Sweetie, I am so sorry. I cannot even begin to comprehend the pain that you are going through.

You are right, it is my fault I should have trusted God, I should have lead our family and I didn't.

Now, look at the mess that my faithlessness and lack of leadership have gotten us in. Let me go and talk to Hagar and see how we can work things out."

That would have been nice.

- But, unfortunately that is not what happened.

Genesis 16:6 ⁶ "Your slave is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best."

Wow Abram!

- How noble of you.
- You are a real standup guy!

"Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar so much that she ran away from her.

There are no heroes in this story!

- Hagar is arrogant and belittling
- Sarah is Cruel
- And Abram is ... Well, he is just Docile.
- No one is innocent.
- And the situation has become very sticky and messy.

Now the story takes an unexpected turn as Hagar runs away.

- You sort of expect the camera to focus back on Abram & Sarai ...
- The recipients of the promise.
- BUT it doesn't.

Instead the camera follows the pregnant Hagar as she flees into the desert ...

Genesis 16:7-11 ⁷ The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert ... ⁸ And he said, "Hagar, slave 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. (It is going to be a boy 😊) You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard your cry of affliction."

Why Ishmael?

- For the Lord has heard your cry of affliction.
- For the name **Ishmael means "God hears."**

What is he saying?

- Hagar, God has heard your cries.
- He knows about your tears and your confusion.
- He knows about the mistreatment that you have experienced ...
- At the hands of Sarai.

Hagar, God has heard you!

- Then this run-away slave does something interesting.
- She names God.

Genesis 16:13 ¹³ She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: "You are *El Roi* (which means ...) – the God who sees me."

You are the God who sees me.

Who is this God that was leading the Israelites through the Land Between.

- He is the God who hears.
- He is the God who sees.
- He is the God who takes up the cause of the rejected ...
- The unloved and the mistreated.

The Israelites knew the story of Abram, Sarai and Hagar.

- They knew he was the God who sees and who hears.
- And not only did they "know" their story ...
- They experienced the same thing first hand.

Remember Exodus 15, 16 & 17? God was the one who ...

- Provided a way for them through the Red Sea.
- Guided them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
- Gave them food and water, when they had nothing to eat or drink.
- And He was the one who sent them Moses to rescue them.

And do you remember what God said to Moses when he first approached him through the burning bush in Exodus 3:7 "I have SEEN the misery of my people in Egypt. I have HEARD them crying out because of their slave drivers ...

They have experienced God's provision firsthand.

- But, their hearts were so hardened and consumed with themselves
- That they missed who God was and ...
- Who God has showed himself to be again and again.
- He is the God who SEES and the God who HEARS.

He is the God who SEES your difficulty ...

- Who sees your loneliness or despair
- ...
- ...

He is the God who hears your cries ...

- ...
- ...

Ok, so he Sees and he Hears, but what I want to know is ?

- Does he Care?

In the New Testament Jesus is talking to a crowd of people

- Who is most likely poor, hungry and in despair.

- And he makes a penetrating statement ...

Matthew 6:25–30 ²⁵ “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.

What do you mean, don't worry?

- We don't know if we will have something to eat and wear tomorrow

Then he looks up, points to the birds and says ... ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Do you see them living in panic and despair...?

- As to what it is that they will eat?
- Aaaahhh, no we don't.

Why not?

- Because your heavenly father feeds them.

Are you not much more valuable than they?

- Do you not think that you are of greater importance to God?
- Than the birds.

Then he asks another penetrating question.

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? //

See how the flowers of the field grow. (How the flowers grow wildly.) They do not labor or spin.

In other words ...

- You don't see them being responsible for their own beauty, do you?

²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

Solomon was known as the wealthiest king in the history of Israel.

- And not even Solomon with all of his wealth
- And all of his splendor and all of his royal robes
- Was dressed like one of these.

Then he asks yet another penetrating question.

³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

Not only does God SEE you and HEAR you ...

- He also CARES!

³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

If you are maybe facing ...

- A Prolonged illness, financial collapse, family pain
- Career confusion, unexplained depression ...

Don't give into anxiety.

- Don't let it take your energy.
- Don't let it control you.

³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Worry and anxiety is the expected response from Pagans.

- For they are disconnected from a living God
- Who sees, hears and cares.

Sometimes God put us in a tight spot

- To see what is in our hearts
- To test us.
- Do we trust him?

Let's check back in with Moses.

- The wilderness camp is in an uproar.
- The people are sick of their manna diet.
- They miss the vegetables, cucumbers and onions of Egypt.
- And they are crying out to Moses, "Give us meat to eat!" (Num. 11:13)

As we stand on the outside of this story there are two questions.

1. How will Moses process all of this?
2. And how will God respond to Moses response.

Last week we looked at how Moses responded.

- He basically had a meltdown
- And had an open and honest conversation with God saying ...

Numbers 11:12 ¹² Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land **YOU** promised on oath to **THEIR** ancestors?

¹³ Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' ¹⁴ I **CANNOT** carry all these people by myself; the **BURDEN** is too **HEAVY** for me.

So, how did Moses respond to all of this?

- He had a meltdown!
- This is crazy!
- These are not my babies.
- This burden is too heavy.

Ever felt that way?

Next question is ...

- How is God going to respond to his response?

Numbers 11:16–17 ¹⁶ The Lord said to Moses, "What on earth are you doing, freaking out like that? Who do you think you are? Get back in there and do what I called you to do!!!"

NO! ...

Numbers 11:16–17 ¹⁶ The Lord said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you.

¹⁷ I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone.

God says, you are right.

- I can see and hear your pain.
- I can see that the burden is too **HEAVY** for you.
- And I am concerned for you my friend.

So bring me 70 of Israel's elders

- Who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people.
- And have them come to the tent of meeting.

The tent of meeting also known as the **Tabernacle**.

- Was a portable worship structure in the center of the Israelite camp.
- It housed the ark of the covenant (with the 10 commandments).
- And represented the physical presence of God among the people.

Numbers 11:25 ²⁵ Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders.

What was God doing?

- He was providing Moses with help.
- But not by airlifting him and the people to the Promised Land.
- That would not make any sense ...
- Cause they were in the Land Between for a reason.

They were an unruly mob of former slaves

- Indoctrinated in generation of Egyptian idol worship.
- And they had to become a people of trust, a people of God.
- The Land Between was Trust school for both them and Moses.

Yet in the midst of all of that God is saying to Moses ...

- I see, I hear, I am concerned and I am going to provide you with help.

He takes some of the Spirit that is on Moses

- And places it on the 70 leaders
- Empowering them to lift Moses burden.

What do we learn from the story?

- God sees, he hears, he is concerned and he provides.

He heard their cries when they were in Egypt.

- He saw their suffering.
- He was concerned about them and therefore send them Moses.

Now he heard Moses cries.

- He saw his suffering and
- He provided him with help.

Here is a big question?

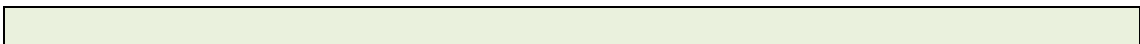
- Does he still provide for us today?

My experience has been, ABSOLUTELY!

- Not necessarily in the way we would want him to?
- We want him to just airlift us out of the Desert
- And put us down softly in the green space.
- DANELLE → Can't we just fast forward?

He might not provide in the way we would want him to.

- But, provide he does.



"My mother died on November 30, which meant that my father lost his wife and that five children under the age of fourteen lost our mom between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The holidays only added weight to our grief.

As Christmas drew near, a big box arrived at our home. The box was filled with individually wrapped Christmas presents from a church in a nearby city that had a connection with our family and was aware of the heartache we were facing. An accompanying note to my father relayed, "Don't worry about Christmas presents for your children this year. We want to take care of their Christmas."

A couple days later, another large box arrived, also containing wrapped Christmas gifts. These came from another church in a nearby city, and again a heartfelt message read, "Don't worry about buying your children Christmas presents. Please let us take care of this."

A day or two later, when we received a third cache of gifts, I distinctly remember thinking, I sure hope these churches don't find out about each other.

Then we received gifts a few days after Christmas from a fourth congregation. They were greatly apologetic about the presents arriving late, but I was ecstatic! It was as if Christmas wouldn't end that year.

While the gifts did not take away our grief, the arrival of a box and the mercy that motivated the givers were like a whisper from God: "I am here. I see what you're going through. I know and I care. I haven't forgotten you."

We were not suddenly well, and my own turmoil had not dissipated with the arrival of a football and Hot Wheels cars. Things were still pretty much a mess. But in the mess, God reminded our grieving family that we were not alone."