



GOBIN CHURCH
A United Methodist Community for All

Monday, June 22, 2020

Genesis 16:1-15

You're never too old to serve God. That's one truth that can be learned from today's Scripture reading. Most people want to be useful. Staying strong and faithful despite changing ability or difficult circumstances is a tough challenge. Sarah is determined to make God's plan happen. The dramatic moments in the story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar have been repeated in relationships for generations since then. Another interesting fact is that the spiritual roots of Judaism, Christianity and Islam spring from this story, with angst and despair going back to the very conceptions of Ishmael and Isaac. This story has as many points of view as the face of a compass. Try standing in the middle of this story and looking out from a variety of viewpoints – that of Sarah, Hagar, Abraham, a older person who wants to be useful, a slave girl, a descendant looking back through time, an immigrant family living in a new place trying to establish roots, a peace advocate. It's not wrong to use many perspectives when seeking truth and a better way forward.

Prayer

Dear God, Thank you for this story of perseverance by Sarah. Without this feisty woman, there would have been no Isaac, no Jacob, no Mary, no Deborah, no Jesus. We'd have no great example of a woman laughing in the Bible. We'd be short one tough older woman who made things happen. Thank you, God, for the powerful women in our lives who are examples of faith. Amen.

Action

Share a story today about an older woman who has been a great influence in your life because of her determination.

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

Genesis 25:12-18

Have you ever been to a family reunion where a cousin lays a document on the table and declares a work in process – a genealogy of the family. Maybe it starts at some point in the past and moves forward through generations to now. Maybe it starts with a current generation and moves backward through time. In several of its chapters, the Bible might be considered an early version of Ancestry.com. Many family lists are in there. Today's scripture reading lists the descendants of Ishmael, a son of Abraham and the Egyptian slave Hagar. Earlier in Genesis, a family split had occurred, with Hagar and Ishmael banished to the wilderness. Thirst almost kills them, but God hears the cries of mother and son, and promises a great nation will come from Ishmael. Despite their hardships, Hagar and Ishmael are survivors. Hagar became a revered figure in Islam, sometimes called Islam's spiritual foremother. Her story offers a point of view of a slave who had little choice in her life. She eventually was forced out of a painful situation as a slave, and she relied on faith and prayer. Although Hagar and Abraham's wife Sarah never find reconciliation, many women in history have dedicated their lives to establishing peace in families, national or international systems. What women do you see taking a lead role in peacemaking today? Is there a situation now where women are establishing peace and working for justice?

Prayer

Dear God, Thank you for the example of Hagar and Ishmael, who persevered despite their disadvantage in society. By calling out to you they found relief. We also seek relief in our various situations today. Strengthen us to move ahead in positive ways that promote healthy community. us to speak up for the disadvantages and overlooked. Open the ears and hearts of leaders who can make policy changes that uplift all people. Amen

Action

Find out about current women leaders in society, in faith communities, in politics, in education. Explore ways you can support their efforts.

Wednesday, June 24, 2020

Matthew 10:5-23

Getting picked for a team can seem really important in school. Whether it's for a playground team, an official squad to represent a grade level, or an academic group, getting picked for the team can be a big self-esteem boost. Getting picked last can be an "Ouch" too. Maybe you've been in both situations. Some wise advice came from my middle school gym teacher, who told us it didn't matter what order we were picked. What mattered was the effort we put into the game. Jesus shared a similar message when he commissioned the twelve apostles in today's Scripture. He gave them instructions and encouragement. He knew there would probably be rejections and they would be harassed, but they weren't to give up. Their effort mattered. Have there been times when you were doing what you knew was important work, but no one seemed to appreciate it? Imagine how healthcare workers might feel today as they spread the important message of continued diligence in mask wearing, hand washing and social distancing to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Having that message ignored must be frustrating.

Prayer

Dear God, I've accepted your authority in my life as a coach, mentor and guide. It's my responsibility to be a team player. Effort matters. Continue to guide me during difficult times so others may experience your love and mercy. Amen.

Action

Give a pep talk to someone who seems discouraged by a challenge. Be a listener.

Thursday, June 24, 2020

Micah 7:18-20

Sitting on a window sill above the kitchen sink, a little angel statue watched over my mother's kitchen. My brother and I had saved up to buy the little angel because it had a pink ribbon with the month January on it, our mother's birth month, and we gave it to her for Mother's Day. While it had a place of honor on the window sill, it turned out to be a dangerous place for the angel to rest. One day it was knocked into the sink and broken while my brother and I were arguing while we washed dishes. Our mother was disappointed, but my brother and I were devastated we had broken one of the angel's golden wings. Rather than being mad, mom found some glue and carefully put the angel back together. She forgave us and moved the repaired angel to a safer place. Through the years, my brother and I would occasionally tease each other about who broke the angel. I asserted it must have been him, because mom was more likely to forgive him than me! But really, she held onto the gift, not the damage. That's what God does with us too. Our iniquities are forgiven. Cast into the depths of the sea. I still have that little angel. It sits on a window sill above my piano. The crack in the wing is hard to find, but the forgiveness remains.

Prayer

Dear God, Forgive me for the squabbles I nurse and the brokenness I cause. I want to be forgiving, just as you forgive me. Thank you for your love and your continuing care. Amen

Friday, June 25, 2020

Luke 17:1-4

Being asked to challenge someone by declaring them a sinner makes me uncomfortable. To be honest, I know I sin through my own thoughts, words and deeds. So who am I to call out someone else for succumbing to temptations? I don't want to be that hypocrite who doesn't do what she preaches. With these Scripture verses, I prefer to focus on the forgiveness. I know I need forgiveness and I'm thankful that Jesus points out that repeated forgiveness is due to those who ask for it. Yet, an obligation still exists to point out pitfalls to others. As with all things, balance is important, as is a heaping spoonful of grace and love.

Prayer

Dear God, Forgive me and I forgive others. Increase my faith so I will operate in a faithful mode through the guidance of Jesus. Help me to help others, to encourage others, and to love others, in spite of all the things that cause us to drip and fall. I want to offer a hand of help to others. May I also be willing to accept a hand of help when I need it. Amen.

Action

Make a list of people who you think need your forgiveness. Make another list of people who you should ask to grant forgiveness to you. Which list is longer? Take action on both lists.

Saturday, June 27, 2020

Genesis 26: 23-25

Settling disputes through diplomacy rather than violence is the point of a peace treaty. The motivation may be to lessen damage to either side. An example from childhood: If you don't knock down my Lego house, I won't destroy your model ship project. When voiced with an undercurrent of threat, is that really diplomacy or is it intimidation? Reaching a mutually beneficial outcome to end a dispute sounds good. It usually means all parties must also give up something. A current tension in America is the removal of many longtime symbols on products and in society that have a racist backstory. The resistance to removing these symbols seems to rest in a lack of understanding about how racism affects everyone. Some uncomfortable discussions about the issue are likely to stay in the public discourse for a while. Being open to change in order to grow more Christlike in our love and acceptance of all people is part of our spiritual growth.

Prayer

Dear God, Make me an instrument of your peace. Help me to value all people as your beloved children. Prod me to speak up with diplomacy for those facing discrimination. Lead me on a path that brings respect and encouragement to all people. Amen

Action

Look around for symbols of racism and discrimination in your community. Discuss with leaders how those symbols can be removed peacefully with a message that all people are valued.