

twelvebaskets

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ORDINARY 12A

25th June 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening / centering prayer

When all around is noisy and busy, help me in this moment to be still with you.

Silence

When my mind is chaotic and full of wondering, help me in this moment to be sure of you.

Silence

When my soul is troubled, help me in this moment to be calmed by you.

Silence

If you feel able speak these words aloud:

Still, calm and sure I come to worship you.

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Reading: Genesis 21:8-21 – [Click for reading](#)

Response to the reading

Today we are looking at one of the lesser known stories in the Old Testament – the story of Hagar. It might not be a regular story for preaching or Bible study, but it's worth our time today.

Let's imagine for a moment that for Genesis 21, Hagar is the most important person in the story. What do we actually know about her? She is presented with almost no agency in the Bible – she is ordered by Sarah to sleep with Abraham and forced to bear his child. How would you feel if you were Hagar? It's perhaps not surprising that when she discovered she was pregnant, she hated Sarah.

Throughout the story, we see time and again that no one cares about Hagar. No one, that is, except God. When Hagar fears that she and her son Ishmael will die in the desert, God's angel speaks to her and God opens her eyes to a well, that they might drink and live. God cares what happens to Hagar. In chapter 16 she called God "the God who sees me", as no one else saw her.

Hagar was a slave, a victim of abuse, an Egyptian foreigner, a runaway, a woman – and yet she was given a gift of an angelic visitation; of knowing that God saw her. In Matthew 10 Jesus told his disciples "Do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows". The angel also told Hagar not to be afraid. Because she too, just like the disciples, is worth more than many sparrows.

You might know someone who feels like Hagar. Just as God saw Hagar, God sees them. God sees those trapped in slavery – fifty million children, women and men all over the world. Do you? Some of them are probably in your neighbourhood. God sees victims and survivors of abuse. Do you notice them? They are likely in your favourite coffee shop, or they may be sitting with you at church today. God sees those who have fled their homes, and those who face abuse because of their gender. Do you see them, as God sees them?

You might even feel like Hagar yourself - unloved, mistreated, like others have power over you, like no one notices you're there. But you are number one on God's call sheet. God knows who you are, God knows what's going on in your life. God sees you. God knows you. God loves you. No strings attached.

Questions to ponder or for discussion:

Who do you identify with in this story – Hagar, Sarah, or Abraham? Or Ishmael or Isaac? Why?

How do you react to the idea that Sarah and Abraham may have been slave owners, and abused Hagar?

The attitudes and perspectives of people in the Bible is often not the same thing as the attitude and perspective of God. Where do you see God in this story? What's God's attitude?

Who are the outcasts in your society? Who are you jealous of? Whose children do you look down on? Do you need to ask forgiveness for any prejudices you may have, known or unknown?

God loves you. No strings attached. How does this make you feel?¹

Hymn:

Responding in song – as you listen to this hymn, or join in with the words as and when you know them, you might like to think about how it is that you are invited to respond to all you have read and reflected on today.

How might knowing Jesus change you?

489 STF – All I once held dear, built my life upon - [YouTube](#)

[Please note, Twelvebaskets does not own the rights to this video – please check with the rights holder before using in public worship or online].

Responding in prayer

As a response to the reading, and to the questions raised, you might like to turn to Psalm 86. The Psalms have always been source of prayer and response for people seeking to follow God and this one is a prayer of faith, a prayer for help, and a prayer of worship. You might like to simply read the words of the Psalm out loud, and then join in the prayer pointers below.

Psalm 86 – [Click for reading](#).

- Pray for those who are fleeing persecution or domestic violence.
- Pray for women and children trapped in the slave trade.
- Ask forgiveness for your own prejudices.
- I ask healing for any hurt I have caused.

¹ Reflection written by Abi Jarvis

Violence against women in the Bible: biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/shetoo (episode 2 is about Hagar)

Modern day slavery: modernslaveryhelpline.org (08000 121 700) run by Unseen

Domestic violence: nationaldahelpline.org.uk (0808 2000 247) run by Refuge

In a moment of silence, bring to mind all the people you know who feel unloved. Thank God for God's love for them.

Amen.

Blessing

May I go out from here, with an open-hearted God at my side,
May I go out from here, with a loving God who is out there already, waiting for me,
May I go out from here and face the week ahead, with the Spirit of God within me.

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 26th June

- Look up a hymn or worship song on YouTube and sit and listen: don't do anything else while you listen.
- Let your mind, body and soul tune into God through the music in prayer.

Tuesday 27th June

- Go outdoors and find something natural: a stone, leaf, flower, or something else. Consider the ways God has made this thing and then reflect on how you too are wonderfully made by God. What does this mean to you?

Wednesday 28th June

- Think about how God is at work in the lives of everyone. You can see God shining out from all people. Remember this with the next person you speak to, and give thanks for the glimpses of God you see in them.

Thursday 29th June

- Light a candle. Jesus is the light of the world. Pray about the places you experience darkness in your life, that Jesus light might shine there.

Friday 30th June

- Open your Bible at the Psalms and read one as a prayer to God. What resonates with you?
- Does anything make you feel uncomfortable?
- Consider in what ways these old words feel new to you and offer them to God.

Saturday 1st July

- Here at the start of this new month, spend some time in stillness and quiet, thinking about what new things you would like to start or get involved in this month. What would a new, healthy habit look like for you, what could you let go of?
- God who makes all things new, show me the new thing you are doing in my life, show me how to get involved.