



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

“Queens & Kings: Sarah”

Bp. Rice Broocks – May 11, 2014

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- When was the last time you moved to a new location? What motivated the move?
- What's the dumbest thing you did growing up?
- Do you recall a Christmas or birthday when you were expecting a particular gift and you didn't get it? How did you react?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at bethelbrentwood.org/media.

Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.” (Genesis 21:1-7 NIV)

God was faithful and fulfilled his promise to bless Sarah and her husband with a son in her old age (90 years old). This is a wonderful culmination to her long journey that involved many years of pain, pressure, and perseverance. Her story began 25 years earlier when God revealed himself to her husband.

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. 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. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” So Abram went, as the Lord had told him... Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out... He took his wife...and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. (Genesis 11:31-12:5 NIV)

It is difficult for us to imagine what this was like. Abram and Sarai had been steeped in a polytheistic society, but God revealed himself to Abram at the age of 75 and called him to a distant land with a promise to make him into a great nation and to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. This concerned Sarai since the promise involved offspring. This was significant, for Sarai was childless and barren in a culture where children were highly prized and women were specifically valued for the purpose of childbearing. Through Abram God called Sarai from a life of pain to a life of promise and hope.

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.” But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless...?” And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.” Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” (Genesis 15:1-6 NIV)

After much time had passed Abram had become discouraged, and presumably Sarai as well. It seemed as though they would never have a child together. Sarai had received a promise, but still endured barrenness. This led to pressure in their lives. Earlier under pressure they had lied by saying she was his sister (in truth, she was related to him) in an attempt to protect his life and so preserve their hope for a child (Genesis 12:10-20). Now under pressure again, they resorted to trying to fulfill God's promise in a foolish way. Sarai suggested Abram have a child through her maidservant. But this would not be the fulfillment of God's promise.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him... Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you..." (Genesis 17:1-8 NIV)

God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" (T)hen God said, "(Y)our wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him..." (Genesis 17:15-21 NIV)

God visited them yet again and made it very clear that his promise would come through Sarah. Everything God had promised to Abraham he also explicitly promised to Sarah. She was to be a joint heir with her husband. In spite of all their flaws, shortcomings, and sins, God would be faithful to his promise.

The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby... "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said. Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?" Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son." Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh." (Genesis 18:1, 2, 9-15 NIV)

God came and appeared to Abraham and Sarah in human form as three men (a pre-incarnate theophany). One specific reason for the visit was to speak the promise of a son in the hearing of Sarah for her benefit. Sarah had had difficulty believing she would bear a child, which is not surprising given her age. But God addressed her unbelief with yet another promise of assurance. She did in fact conceive and give birth to Isaac. Hebrews 11:11 honors her: *"And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise."* Sarah had suffered pain, received a promise, endured pressure, persevered, and ultimately received the prize.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- Looking back on your life, can you tell of a poor choice you made but God has redeemed?
- Have you received a promise from God that hasn't been fulfilled yet? What are you doing to keep your faith and hope alive?
- What can you do to withstand the pressure to give up your promise?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- That God would strengthen our faith to believe his personal promises to each of us.
- That God would strengthen our hope to persevere until we receive God's promises fulfilled.
- That God would strengthen our love to encourage others who are under pressure.