

The God Who Sees You

Genesis 16: 1-16

Context

- Gen 15 → Abrahamic Covenant
 - * Abram told he will have a son + his offspring would possess the land they stand on
- Gen. 17-18 → God reaffirms his covenant w/ Abram + changes his name to Abraham (father of many nations)
 - * Isaac is born in Gen 21
- Gen 21 → Sarah tells Abraham to send Hagar + Ishmael away
 - * Hagar thinks they will die in the wilderness but God hears the boy crying and tells Hagar to take him; that He will take care of them → "God was with the boy"

What don't I understand? → Sarah's poor treatment of Hagar

What is the writer communicating? → God sees and hears people, even at their worst

Details

- Hagar didn't ask to be here
- Sarai treated her so badly she ran away
- God told her to go back + submit to Sarai
 - ↳ God doesn't always turn around the situation like we hope

- name him Ishmael → "God hears"
- El Roi → the one who sees me
- Gen 21
 - * another wilderness experience of hopelessness
 - * 21:17 → God heard

Commentary

(16)

- Custom of the day for a woman (barren) to conceive through a servant.
- Abram sinfully yielded to Sarai
- Hagar became contempt towards Sarai + Sarai asked Abram to take care of it, but he passed it on to Sarai
- the angel was God: v. 13 (preincarnate Christ) → Ex 3:2, Acts 7:33
- Took place in Shur → south of Palestine + east of Egypt → she was returning to her home in Egypt.
- Hagar was a slave → rebellion wasn't the solution
- Ishmael was a reminder that God heard Hagar's cry
↳ he would become the head of Arabic people
- Naming him El Roi ascribed to him, she was astonished to be the object of God gracious attention.

(21)

- Sarah requesting Hagar + Ishmael to leave went against the law of that day (a son of a maidservant should not be cast out). She 1) broke social law, 2) offended Abraham's sensibilities, and 3) his love for Ishmael.
* however, God gave approval
- Ishmael (17) cried out + God heard (again)

Observations

- Sarai showed ongoing bad behavior but was blessed ???
→ God's favor of Abraham?
- Hagar had been marginalized + second fiddle until that day in the wilderness; she had been mistreated

• Hears:

* Silence doesn't mean He's not near

* Verses

→ Psalm 56:8-9, "kept a record of my wanderings, put my tears in a bottle"

→ Jer. 29:12-13, "I will listen, you will seek me + find me"

→ 2 Kings 20:5, "I have heard your prayer"

• Sees:

* Sees your innermost / your worth + value

* maybe she thought being Abram's wife would make her feel seen but only God saw her

* verses

→ 2 Chron 16:9, "eyes look for someone to strengthen"

• Strength to do it all. to cook, work, trust, etc.

• we don't have to jump through hoops to be seen

→ Gen 28:15, "I will watch over you"

→ Deut. 32:10, "guarded in the desert land"

→ Psalm 121:8, "watch your coming + going"

• Application:

→ Submission

→ It was an unexpected blessing

→ background, status, choices don't matter

→ wasn't a pass to the best scenario

Roman → how long to be heard + seen by my

Digging Deeper

- Subject → who are you in God's eyes?
- Compliment → you are seen + heard; you have incredible worth.
 - * you are not second fiddle or forgotten to Him
- Explain → you might feel alone; unheard + unseen. But God both hears + sees you, wherever you are.
- Prove → my story of miscarriage
- Apply → you don't have to wonder about your identity — God knows.

Big Idea

Your hurt is seen and your cries heard by the Creator.

What Do I Hope to Happen in Their Heart?

That you will intimately know the attention and care God has for you. You won't settle in the wilderness or escape the place God has you in, but realize you are heard + seen at your very core.

The God Who Sees You — Genesis 16

Introduction

- Big Idea → Your hurt is seen and your cries heard by the Creator of the Universe.
- But I know that's not always easy to believe. In fact, some of you have come in here this morning and you feel:
 - INVISIBLE
 - The honeymoon stage is long gone and the romance has faded, and you feel more like a partner or co-worker in your marriage than a wife.
 - You're having a hard time building community and finding your tribe—those ladies who just get you, ya know.
 - At work, you're not taken seriously because you're a woman or a mom or whatever the case may be. You're invisible.
 - OR, you feel VOICELESS
 - Your kids fought you tooth and nail at bedtime last night and no matter how many times you called their name, they didn't (or wouldn't) hear a word you said.
 - You were the victim of abuse and you tried to tell someone, but you were told to be silent. There was no advocate for you in the corner.
- ***Every woman in this room this morning has likely felt unheard and unseen a time or two.***
 - Individually, we might all feel alone. But collectively, here in this room, right now, we are a sisterhood. And we can be confident that we are seen and we are heard by the God of the Universe.
- There's one woman in the Bible who knew all too well what it felt like to be invisible, unappreciated, forgotten, taken advantage of, and voiceless. Her name is Hagar.

Body

- Open your bible with me to Genesis 16 and let's read her story.
READ.
- Okay, let's talk about Hagar for a moment. Who was she?
 - Slave from Egypt.
 - Sarai's maidservant.
 - That's it!
 - But we're going to see God work in and through the life of this foreigner, no one gave much care for.
- Now, to better understand this story she is brought into and give you some context to chapter 16, it's important to note what happened just before this story and just after.
 - Genesis 15 → God established with Abram a covenant that he would have an heir and that his descendants would occupy the very land he stood on.
 - Genesis 17 → God reaffirms His covenant with Abram and proves it with a name change to Abraham, "father of many nations."
 - As you can see, the promise that Abram would have a son is *central* to this part of the Bible. Everyone is talking about it, thinking about it, praying about it. It's on everyone's heart and mind.
- Now back to chapter 16. Abram and Sarai have been waiting on God's promise for a very long time. Sarai is in her 70's and Abram in his 80's and it had been about a decade since God's promise in chapter 15 that he would have a son.
 - Now just think for a moment: **how would you feel in their shoes?** Likely anxious, am I right. And what do we sometimes have a problem doing when waiting for a dream or a promise or even an answer to a small prayer? Trusting God's timing.
 - Sarai was definitely feeling this. She was anxious. And perhaps she started thinking through how she could help God's plan along or speed up the process. And then she had her big idea!

- But can we just stop here for a moment and stew on this, because I think we can all learn something valuable here? Or at least, I know I can. Because here's the deal: I'm a dreamer and a doer. I want to make things happen! Anyone else?
- Story about trying to get writing gigs and nothing happened. Then I stopped and got a request to write for Crosswalk and the doors kept opening.
 - When I tried pounding the door down, nothing happened. But when I stepped back, the doors flew wide open. Why? Because God's timing had come and He was making it happen.
- Now let me just say upfront that working hard to achieve something is not bad. In fact, it's a very good thing. Hard work reaps a harvest that was sewn when no one was looking. BUT sometimes what can happen is that we get impatient. We get frustrated or tired and decided to give things a little push when clearly, the door has been shut for now or it's not the right way.
 - Let's be honest: us ladies might have an inclination to help God's plan along.
 - The plan He has for our husband's personal growth.
 - Or our children's spiritual growth.
 - The plan He has for your promotion at work or dream volunteer opportunity at church.
 - But this is a dangerous road to take if we're honest, ladies.
 - **When you try to force God's timing or plan, you are essentially saying that you don't trust God. That you doubt His sovereign plan. That you know better.**
- Now, this is where Sarai was. They were growing beyond childbearing years and it had been more than a decade since God's promise to them that they would have a son. Sarai thought time was running out—that they had to have a son asap.

- So what does she do? She comes up with a plan to give Abram the son he had always wanted. But it wasn't going to be through her. She didn't think it was possible. But she did have a maidservant named Hagar and perhaps this could be their answer to prayer. Not God's answer to their prayer, mind you. But their answer.
 - Which, a nugget of gold right here, if you're taking notes: **God's answer to your prayer will always be better than your answer to your prayer. SAY IT AGAIN.**
- So Sarai decides to give Hagar to Abram in marriage to conceive a son. And surprisingly, he agrees. Which, by the way, if he doesn't see in that moment the mess coming, Lord help him!
 - And you may be wondering what Sarai is thinking here. Because it sounds crazy, doesn't it? But it was actually a custom of that day for a barren woman conceive a child through her maidservant so she wasn't totally off her rocker but still, it wasn't what God had in mind regarding His promise.
- So Hagar is married off to Abram and she gets pregnant. And this is where the family drama really gets going. She gets pregnant and forms come contempt towards Sarai and Sarai begins to treat her poorly.
 - Now I honestly wrestle with this a little bit because Hagar didn't ask to be in this situation. She didn't ask to be given in marriage to Abram or have a child with him. It was all put on her.
 - So yeah, maybe she feels a bit of disregard towards Sarai for putting her in this situation and now she feels like perhaps she has the upper hand. And Sarai, who, by the way, came up with this whole idea and put them here, starts treating Hagar badly.
- And what does Hagar do? She decides to take her chances by traveling to Egypt, alone, through the wilderness, pregnant. So the way Sarai is treating her must have been pretty hard to take those chances.

- She makes the journey and while in the wilderness, she stops by a spring. Maybe she's wondering what she has gotten herself into? She's certainly exhausted—I mean, she's pregnant! I use to have to take breaks just climbing stairs!
- So she's here and that's when God shows up in Hagar's life! In fact, Christ himself shows up. That's who the angel of the Lord.
 - In probably one of the most lonely and difficult moments of her life, God reveals Himself to her in the biggest way. Hagar, an Egyptian slave, got to be witness to the pre-incarnate Christ. Wow! I mean, Jesus didn't do that for just anyone. But he did it for her.
- Let's read it again, starting in verse 7:
 - *The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai."*
 - God isn't surprised by her journey, here. He knows where she is coming from and where she is going to. But if you look throughout Scripture, God has often asked someone a question with an obvious answer, not for His benefit, but for the person, He is talking to. It gets them thinking.
 - Jacob, when God wanted to change Jacob's name and identity in Genesis 32. He asked, "what is your name." It was God showing Jacob that he would no longer be who he was—a deceiver—but who he is—a leader of a nation.
 - Or when Jesus talked with Peter after the resurrection in John 21. He asked Peter three times if Peter loved Him, knowing Peter did, but to remind Peter of his calling and as a sort of reconciliation after Peter's denial of Him on the way to the cross.
 - God is asking Hagar where she is coming from and going, not because He doesn't know, but because He wants Hagar to come to this realization of what she is doing and why.

- When she expresses it, it's more real, you know. Like when we get our husband or boyfriend to think our great idea is his great idea, right?!
- Ok, let's keep reading! Verse 9,
 - *The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her."*
 - We have to remember—Hagar was a slave and in that time it was disobedient for a slave to rebel against their master. And essentially, Hagar needed to know that rebellion wasn't the answer. In fact, rebellion is never the answer to our problems. Submission is. Submission to God's will. That's where favor and purpose are found. In His will. And God had a plan and purpose for Hagar.
- Verse 10,
 - *The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." And the angel of the Lord said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction. He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."*
 - You see, God didn't just have a plan for Abram's heir, Isaac (which, is in a few chapters down the road), **but He had a plan for Hagar's child as well.** Ishmael would be a leader. Although not of God's people and he doesn't necessarily have the best description of his future, God still had a plan for this servant and her child. That's why Abram would be called the father of many nations—Ishmael would be a leader of the Arabic people...of a different nation.
 - God had a plan for a woman who felt forgotten and her child.
- Now here is where we get to the best part! Here is Hagar's declaration of God and how He made her feel. It starts in the verse we just read—verse 11:

- Ishmael—his name means **“God Hears”**
- God wanted Hagar to forever have a reminder that He heard her. That, He does hear here. She wasn’t Abram’s covenant wife that an heir was promised with...she was a slave living with a foreign people...she had been treated poorly by the people responsible for her...marginalized...but she was still someone incredibly valuable to Him.
- Her cries were not silent to His ears. She was heard, then and forever. God was not going to let Hagar to feel voiceless in her situation.
 - Let me ask you—do you feel voiceless? Maybe at home: you wonder if your children hear you after you plead with them to stop fighting with each other, multiple times. Or maybe you feel voiceless because your husband won’t really hear you when you share your heart struggles with him.
 - Maybe at work—people get promoted over you or your ideas aren’t welcome. You feel like your input isn’t appreciated.
 - These are hard situations. I get it—feeling like you don’t have a voice can make you feel like you don’t have value. That you don’t matter. But let me tell you—your cries and prayers rise to the One who all other people and things bend to. And when you might feel like you don’t have a voice here, let me tell you, you have a voice with Him.
 - **2 Kings 20:5**, *“Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears.”*
 - **Jeremiah 29:12-13**, *“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”*
- Let’s read the second part of this beautiful passage. Verse 13,
 - *“So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who*

looks after me.” Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi;” which means, the well of the Living One who sees me.

- Imagine, for a moment, being Hagar. She was an Egyptian woman whose life had been committed to serving someone else. Someone of greater wealth and stature. She probably felt invisible—a figure in the background of someone else’s story.
- But then she is given to be the man’s wife and maybe, even though it wasn’t her decision and maybe not necessarily desired, she thinks as a wife she’ll be seen. As the mother of this man’s son, she’ll have a visible role in this greater story.
- But it wasn't what she thought she would be. She was abused and mistreated. Visible only as far as it brought greater burden and mistreatment to her life.
- And here she is, in the wilderness. And God speaks to her. Prophesied purpose over her and her son. **The Creator of the Universe SEES her.** For the first time, she is truly seen.
- Her visibility didn’t come from someone on this earth—it came from the One who holds the earth together!
- Friend, God sees your innermost fears, desires, dreams, and hurts. You might feel invisible in your home or work or church—a character in the background, forgotten—but God wants you to know TODAY that He sees you. You! Right here, right now.
- **Deut. 32:10**, *“He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.”*
- **Psalms 121:8**, *“The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.”*
- **2 Chronicles 16:9**, *“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”*
 - We don’t have to jump through hoops to be seen!

- God will give you the strength to do what He has called you to do. To work, to care for your family, to follow the call on your life. In Him, you find the strength to keep moving forward.
 - Because you know what, when Hagar had her encounter with God, it wasn't a deliverance out of her problems. In fact, God sent her right back where she had come from. Right back to the difficult situation. So His encounter with her didn't deliver her from all her troubles, but what it did do is remind her of her worth, that He sees and hears her, and that He will strengthen her for the purpose He has for her.
 - That's why Hagar called God, El Roi—the God who sees me. Hagar was ascribing to God this astonishment that she would be the object of His gracious attention.
 - Friend, let me encourage you—in those moments when you feel unseen and invisible, cry out to El Roi. The God who sees you!
- You know, I've noticed with my two year old Roman—and if you're a mom, or even worked with children—you'll know this: he just wants to be felt heard and seen by his mama. More than anything in this world, he wants to know that he matters to me. That I'll put down the phone to play with him. To know I'll come running when he falls. When I see him call my name and from the corner of my eye, I see him stare at me until I look, and light up with the assurance that his mom loves him because I heard him and saw him.
 - Roman finds peace and value knowing he is the apple of my eye—that's what the Father wants you to know today. That you matter to Him. That you are the apple of His eye. And you matter to Him.
- Let me share with you how I, personally, know this to be true. **Share miscarriage story.**
- **WORSHIP TEAM, YOU CAN COME UP.**

Closing

- This wasn't the last time God and Hagar had an intimate moment. In Genesis 21, after Isaac was born, Sarah wanted Hagar and Ishmael gone. She had her son and wanted nothing to do with them anymore.
- Sarah told Abraham she wanted Hagar and Ishmael gone. Which, by the way, was wrong in every way.
 - She went against social customs of that day that permitted a maidservant and child could remain with the family even if the wife had a child.
 - And she offended and hurt her own husband, knowing Abraham still loved Ishmael, his son. She put her pride before her husband's heart.
- But God gave Abraham permission to allow it to happen because remember, He had a plan for Ishmael too.
- In Genesis 21, Hagar finds herself in the wilderness again, and hopeless. This time, she has a son and she doesn't think they'll survive the journey. She surrenders to the notion they will die.
- But then God again appears to her. He tells her that He has heard the cries of the boy. Again, God heard. And He saved them.

Dear friend, I don't know what you came in here with today. But I do know I want you to leave knowing that your hurt and your cries are heard by the Creator.

You are not second fiddle, invisible, or voiceless to Him——You don't have to worry about your purpose or value——because you are everything to Him!

Please, bow your heads and let's pray.

- I pray over you that you will intimately know the attention and care God has for you.
- You may want to escape the place you're in or settle in the wilderness out of pure exhaustion, but God wants you to know today that you are heard and seen at your very core.
- Jesus died for you.
- If you don't have a relationship with Him...
- If you do but you're wrestling with your worth and value, cry out to your El Roi.

We are going to take some moments here, in this safe place, to connect with Jesus and share our heart with Him.

- If you would like to make a commitment today, come down front and someone from our prayer team would love to pray with you.
- Or if you would simply like someone to pray with you for healing, provision, whatever your need may be, please, come to the altar. James 5:14-15 says, *"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up."*
- Our prayer team has anointing oil and would love to anoint you and pray over you for whatever need you may have.
- Or you are more than welcomed to stay where you are and pray, This time is an opportunity for you to connect with Jesus however you'd like.
- **Let us worship and pray.**