

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

traditional land of the Three Fires Confederacy: the Odawa, Potawatami and Ojibwe.

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Worship This Week Feb. 11, 2024

SCRIPTURE – [Genesis 25:19-26](#)

This is the account of the family of Isaac, the son of Abraham. 20 When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean. 21 Isaac pleaded with the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children. The Lord answered Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. 22 But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the Lord about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked. 23 And the Lord told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son." 24 And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins! 25 The first one was very red at birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau. 26 Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

MESSAGE – **In the Bible**, conception, birth and death are divine appointments, not human accidents. They are part of God's wise and loving plan for His people. Because the human race is a wee bit messed up (always has been) God has not given up on us. As we have seen as we work through Genesis, God's "people" are far from perfect. Then and now, we could use more faith. We could be more patient.

The birth of Isaac took a long time to come about. The Sons of Jacob (from whom we get the 12 tribes of Israel) were produced from four different women – Jacob's two wives and two servants. There's Moses, Samuel, David and John the Baptist. And of course, our Lord himself. Whether difficult or miraculous, births are part of God's plan. God can work with the traditional family as we know it – husband and wife and 2.5 children all born two years apart – but not necessarily. That's one important principle to keep in mind.

The other is faith in prayer. You may recall the story of Abraham's test of faith to sacrifice his only son and we didn't see any evidence of Isaac putting up a fight. This quiet faith

carried on. What was Isaac doing in the field when Rebekah arrived on the scene? Praying. And here we see Isaac pleading with God in prayer for Rebekah to conceive.

Isaac and Rebekah continued the family tradition of waiting a long time before their first born would arrive – 20 years. Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years for Isaac to be conceived. And it's not just for children. As we will see later in Genesis, Jacob would have to work 14 years to earn the right to marry Leah and Rachel. And Joseph would have to wait 20 years in Egypt before being reunited with his brothers. The venture Book of Genesis is about the power of God and the wisdom of his delays.

Isaac would have been well aware of the original call to his father and mother and the promise that they would be the parents of a great nation. He was faithful and knew God would eventually deliver. But that did not stop the human side of him from getting a little anxious. Twenty years is a long time to wait for your first pregnancy. We see the word "plead." Was he pleading for himself? Having no children was a sign that you were out of God's blessing and a course of shame in those days. Isaac knew that they would be blessed. But he still pleaded in prayer. These would have been powerful prayers. He didn't need to pray because God is true to His word. But he pleaded anyway. Not because of a lack of faith. He prayed more in anticipation. He had the sense that the longer it would take for their firstborn to arrive, the better it would be. The purpose of prayer is not to our way but to get God's will done on Earth.

And then we have a difficult pregnancy. Twins are a blessing. But to be constantly fighting in the womb was neither natural nor comfortable. So Rebekah did her own praying. She was also a prayer warrior.

The younger would rule over the elder. This was contrary to human tradition. But it testifies to the truth that God's ways are not our ways. God may appear to make little sense. He may appear to be distant or uninvolved. But He is not absent.

Consider the following points:

1. God's choice of Isaac instead of Ishmael seems more logical to us. Ishmael was born of the servant woman because Sarah and Abraham got tired if waiting and didn't trust in God to provide. God's choice of Jacob over Esau made less sense but it was just as valid.
2. Consider also that God's choice was not based on anything Jacob or Esau did in life. The choice was made in the womb.
3. In rejecting Esau, God was not condemning him. Esau was a blessed man and his offspring became its own powerful nation.

There is a temptation to believe – and this is suggested by the enemy – that God makes his choices for arbitrary reasons, like he closed his eyes and pointed or flipped a cosmic coin. But God is not random and senseless. God chooses according to His divine wisdom, love, and goodness. We may not be able to understand God’s reasons for choosing, and they are reasons He alone knows.

To the unbeliever, to the world, none of that inspires much confidence. Proclaiming to the world that God’s will is beyond our understanding won’t make us very popular. What this world craves is the ability to make sense of everything. We yearn for understanding. For everything to add up. For a logical purpose. When it doesn’t, we wonder if God is absent and doesn’t care. Or we reject the God of the Old and New testaments and look elsewhere for inspiration.

The truth is that we are not meant to have complete understanding in this life. We are invited to have faith. To trust that we have a Creator who knows what He is doing. The evidence for that is the fact that miracles still happen. Lives are changed. Through faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit pours out incredible strength and power within us. And that same power can flow from those who are truly submitted to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The world is more divided than ever. Technology is changing so fast we can’t keep up, let alone make sense of it. I am fond of using the phrase “push the pause button.” We have the ability to do that with a TV show or movie if we want to talk or visit the washroom or go to the kitchen. We are invited to do that also on a cultural, social level – not the entire economy or culture, because that’s impossible – but in our individual lives. Press pause long enough to consider how God may be working. Or ask, “Is God present in this?” If not, how can we add God to something? Again, it’s about patience, prayer and faith.

HYMN – 746 What a friend we have in Jesus

CONTINUE TO PRAY

Health and healing –

1. Brue Stephens: blood pressure, meds. But thanks that radiation treatment is going smoothly
2. Ellen Robinson
3. Pat McKinnon’s friend Linda: discernment and decisions
4. Pat McKinnon’s sister Betty: stage 4 cancer, chemo still seems to be working.

5. Colin Paterson, radiation therapy for prostate cancer
6. Rev. Mary Templar, brain injury: difficulty reading
7. For all those recovering from surgical procedures.
8. Becky Desjardine, Margaret Follows, Ron Mason, Bette Northcott, Karen Northcott, Tom O'Neill, Cherie Pegg, Sandra Pegg, Julie Shaw, Sandra Whitson
9. Anyone seeking or undergoing treatment for addictions
10. Anyone wrestling with anxiety and depression

Seniors and shut ins – Betty Bradley at Albany Retirement Home Petrolia, Dianne Richards at Wallaceburg Retirement Residence, Jim Lusk at Oaks Wallaceburg, Lane Douglas and Ross Fuchs at Fairfield Park in Wallaceburg, Aubrey Butler at home.

Elders on session – Mark Labadie 519-359-4842, Cindy Brewer 519-683-4113, Sheila Eves 519-683-4148, Andrew Neely 519-359-8903, Mark Richards 519-809-9175 and Julie Shaw 226-627-1953, Bob Vriesema 519-401-8056.

Board of managers – Wendy Weston (chair), Will Brewer, Linda Malott, Jenn Mason, Von Parking, Mark Richards, Jodie Rich, Bob Vriesema and Mike Wicks.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

Clothing closet – Free clothing distribution at North Dresden Baptist Church every Tuesday and Thursday from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. A few **MALE volunteers** would be appreciated. All you'd need to do is be present for whatever time you can spare, even just for an hour.

WE'RE HIRING: [A new administrative assistant](#). To start anytime.

WHAT'S UP:

Fundraising – It can be fun and be good for fellowship. Session and the Board are looking for creative new ideas. Write your idea on a post-it note and give it to any board member.

Presbytery consultant– Grant Fairley is scheduled to return and meet with session and the board Sat. Feb. 24 at 10 a.m.

Free Community Meals – Please share this info with anyone in need:

North Dresden Community Church – first Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

Dresden Christian Reformed Church – second Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

DATES

Feb. 13 – 3 p.m. Weekly Bible study & discussion into the Letter to the Ephesians continues. St. Andrew's is hosting. Study guide is attached.

BIRTHDAYS

Feb. 9 – Mike Johnston

Feb. 10 – Ava Hazell Rivett

Feb. 14 – Dale Sayers

Feb. 15 – Brian Wilson