

## Sermon Transcript for June 19,2022

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, we have Abram. He's not even Abraham yet. He's just Abram and Sarai, not even Sarah. So, this is early on in, well, early. This is still five, six, seven years after God called Abram out of his land and sent him to Israel. And still, Abram does not have a child. Now when God changes the name of Abram to Abraham, and from Sarai to Sarah, he adds a portion of His name into their name. In essence, He is calling them His own when He puts His name into their name, calling them by name and making them His own. But this is before all this, He has still called them. But He has not yet shown his promise to them.

So, Abram is a little bit concerned. He's like, I'm childless. And some servant of mine, Eliezer, is going to inherit the kingdom. And so, God sends him out to the stars and says, okay, count the number of stars, if you think you can, and so numerous will your offspring be. Now two things are pretty important to understand here. First off, we could look up in the sky and count the number of lights that we see and probably come up with a decently close number. However, the number of galaxies and stars that are behind those lights are far beyond what the human eye can actually see. So, God is making a pretty bold claim that your descendants are going to be a multitude that cannot even be counted.

And then secondly, it's interesting, so shall your offspring be. You would think that would be a plural word, offspring. But in the Hebrew, it's actually singular. God is making a point. There's going to be an offspring. And this offspring is going to be Christ. And through Christ, the rest of us will be blessed and be able to be part of the kingdom of God. But it is through that single individual offspring, Jesus Christ, in which we have our hope. And remember, what does it say? It says, "And he Abram, believed the Lord. And He, the Lord, counted it to him, Abram, as righteous." So, Abram believed the word of God. And that was why he was considered righteous in the eyes of God.

Now, this is important for us to remember. Because this event is before Sarai got upset that she didn't have a kid and sent Hagar to Abraham, so that they could have Ishmael. In other words, they didn't fully understand what God meant, nor did they follow the word well. They still fell short of the glory of God. They still were not righteous in their actions all the time. Sometimes they forgot. Sometimes they failed. Sometimes they were afraid that things just wouldn't work out. And sometimes they acted upon that and did really dumb things, i.e., have a child with the maid servant, Ishmael, and create all sorts of chaos that is still going on.

But Abram believed the word of God, and it was counted to him as righteous. And this is important as we get into our own lives today because we are counted righteous. And we have hope in this world, not because of how well we are doing. Nor is it how well we have loved our neighbor or our brother even. Because we have failed to live up to the standards of God. And yet it says, God is love. And whoever abides in love, abides in God. And God abides in him. Well, if

I'm honest with myself, I must admit that I am not truly loving of my brother always. And I do have to admit also, later it says that there is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear.

Now think about this. Fear is a very important and poignant topic today. Look at our world around us. It seems like we are getting worse. It seems like evil is succeeding. In fact, we are celebrating evil, having parades to celebrate evil and calling it good. And this society is actively calling what we are as evil. Because we stand up against these things. We are celebrating abortion as if that's a good thing. We're celebrating sexual perversity in all of its courses as if that is a good thing. We are celebrating that everybody can do anything they want as long as it is right in their own eyes. And we look around and it seems like the culture is attacking us. And it seems like we're getting close, closer than we ever thought we were to the end.

And that can drive us to be afraid, to fear for what's going to happen next. But we need to understand that even though we act in fear, or even if we see the wrong in this world, we can know the comfort of God. Because we do abide in love and love abide in us because God abides in us. We have been called by the Gospel. We have been enlightened by his gifts. We have been baptized into the promise of salvation. We are the children of God. We have the Holy Spirit within us and therefore we have love. And so we are counted as righteous because we believe that God's word is effective on and to us. He said, we are his children. He said, our sins are forgiven. Therefore, we believe it to be true.

Even if we don't act that well. Even if we don't love our brother, whom we have seen. Even though we act against the will of God, like Abram and Sarai did, and Hagar. We could know that it is still not our actions that give us comfort, but the action of God upon us so that we do not need to be afraid. Even in the Old Testament, even in the Epistle, or I mean, sorry the Introit, where we have the Psalm is declaring that he feels like God has forgotten him forever and is hiding his face from him. And the evil around him seems to be succeeding. His enemies are prevailing.

Sure feels like that's where we are in this world. But he trusts in the steadfast love of God so that his heart will rejoice in his salvation. And we can sing to the Lord. You see, we have the steadfast love of God, oftentimes in spite of ourselves. But no matter what goes on in this world, no matter how evil it is, the love of God will cast out our fear. Are we in the very, very last times? I know we've been in the last days for 2000 years, so it wouldn't surprise me if maybe we are in the last days, the very, very last days. Or perhaps this is just simply a season and it'll get a little bit better before it gets a lot worse.

I don't know. Either way, it's okay. Either way, we should rejoice in the opportunity that we have to declare the truth of God and the love of God. Because the love of God is in sharp contrast to the ways of this world. And it's becoming more so every day. We are living in a great opportunity where the Gospel, the word of God, is in sharp contrast to what's going on in this world. We have an opportunity because God has established this, that this world is seen a distinct difference between those who love God and those who follow their own desires and do whatever is right in their own eyes. We should rejoice that we have this clarity and this opportunity

because we get to suffer along with Christ. And that sounds weird, I know. And I'm not exactly looking forward to it or thinking, yay, I get to suffer. But I can rejoice. Because if my suffering can bring about somebody else wondering what is this promise that he trusts so strongly, then it'll be a great opportunity for the word of God to prevail in their life.

So let the perfect love of God cast out all fear. The fear that you are unlovable, the fear that God is far off, the fear that this nation and this world is falling apart. Cast off that fear in the love of Christ. He is with you always and He will never leave you nor forsake you. And He will be with you always to the very end of the age. And also take heart, the rich man and Lazarus had very different results in their life. I find it interesting, the rich man, no matter what he's doing is always focused on himself. Send Lazarus to help me out. Well, that doesn't work. Send Lazarus to help my brothers out, but I'm focused on myself.

But God says the word of Me, the law and the prophets is sufficient to hear. God's word has declared to us, let us trust in the words of the Moses and the prophets and the apostles that describe the love of God to us as psalmist said, as first John says, as He says here in Genesis, that God loves us and is with us and He will bless us no matter what trials and tribulations we face. Because we have already the perfect love of God. And that love casts out any fear that we might have. Hold firm to the promise of God and the love of God. And may that love, and that grace and that mercy be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.