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Genesis 21:13-19

We Live We Love: "Rejected"

The Rev. Lynn P. Lampman

Rejection: It is a universal experience. We can't be human and in relationship with others and not experience rejection at one time or another. Some times we find ourselves as the rejected, but we can also be the rejecter.

So, when does rejection start? I think we need to go back at least to when we were toddlers. It was then that we might have experienced some of the following -

a parent preferring:

one child to another,

not being fair when extending privileges,

allowing some siblings to have certain freedom others did not (excluding age appropriate activities),

spending too much time on your phone or online,

not following through on our commitments to our children,

lack of quality time together,

making fun of a child,

interrupting or not letting your child speak,

not showing interest on what makes your child tick,

biting sarcasm,

withholding compliments and praise,

never coming to your children's events.

Then you add:

Not being picked for a game,

Not getting a part in the play after auditioning

Being dumped by a boyfriend or girlfriend,

Not getting into your top choice for college or graduate school,

Not getting the job for which you interviewed,

Getting divorced,  
And that is just the beginning of the list for those who have  
lived more than a decade or two.

Let's jump into the book of Genesis to get a picture of rejection  
and how to deal with it.

This morning, we will look at the life of Hagar and her  
relationship to Abraham and Sarah. First thing to know is:  
Hagar was an Egyptian girl that Sarah secured for her  
household when she was in Egypt. Later, Sarah took her to  
Abraham to bear a son. A custom consistent with moral  
standards prevailing at that time. The product of their union  
was Abraham's firstborn, Ishmael.

Sarah's folly had its roots in unbelief. She was impatient and  
wanted the child promised to her without delay. Abraham  
joined in her folly and thus took Hagar and had a son. With  
their distrust came dishonor.

Let me just say a word hear about these two women, and what  
they had in common. They were both trafficked. Abraham  
gave Sarah to Pharaoh (saying she was his sister) as part of his  
harem, and then everyone got sick, and thus Pharaoh feeling  
she was the source of such trouble lets her go. Yet, Abraham  
and Sarah do not leave Egypt before making a deal. And thus  
as part of the deal, Sarah acquires Hagar as her slave. Both of  
these women were trafficked and abused, treated like objects  
to be bartered and used at the whim of the more powerful  
people in their lives.

The culture deemed that acceptable. And while we have laws  
against such things nowadays, the prevalence of trafficking,

abuse and gender based violence shows that maybe our culture accepts it too, at some level. But God did not.

For fourteen years, Sarah watched Abraham play with his son from Hagar without ever having a child of her own. Tensions arose and jealousy prevailed. After Sarah had her own son Isaac with Abraham, she observed Ishmael mocking Isaac. This led to Sarah demanding that Abraham make Isaac his sole heir. `

God told Abraham that Hagar and her descendants through Ishmael would become a great nation, as God had promised Isaac and his descendants would be. Thus, Abraham rose early in the morning, gave Hagar some bread and water, and sent her away.

Into the wilderness they went, but the water soon ran out. Hagar placed Ishmael under a shrub and then cried out to God. God heard her cry and sent an angel who told her not to fear and added that her son would grow up to be the ancestor of a great nation. God then opened her eyes, and she saw a well nearby. She filled her water bottle and gave the boy a drink, and thus they survived.

There is something in this encounter between God and Hagar that is unique. It is the only instance and reference in all of scripture in which instead of a human beings asking God about God's name, Hagar is naming God "El Roi" which means, "the God who sees". Instead of meeting God and asking God's name, Hagar meets God, and knows exactly who God is and tells God so.

And this wasn't just any person who names God – it was a woman.

And it wasn't just any woman – it was a slave from Egypt, who has been treated horribly by her supposedly God-fearing masters.

God meets her in distress, and she says 'you are El Roi, the God who sees me.' The God who notices all the inequity and injustice being piled on her, all the ways she has been hurt and taken advantage of by people who were supposed to be following God. The God who refused to turn a blind eye to her distress, but instead showed up, and sat with her in it. In fact, God blessed her and her son.

This story of Hagar is important, for it shows that God cares about the suffering of those society has used, rejected, and cast aside.

There is no doubt, this was a horrible rejection for Hagar and Ishmael, but it also was the way, in which God kept God's promise to Hagar, and set her and her son free.

Have you been rejected, only to realize in hindsight that if had not been, life would not have been as good as it is now? Sometimes, after being rejected, we gain what we could not have gotten when being accepted. Rejection can bear fruit, it can be a dream come true, it can be even better than what you had before. It can mean freedom, and a new beginning, for us, as it was for Hagar. `

There is an interesting question God asks Hagar when she is in the dessert. "Where have you come from, and where are you going? That question is really a must for us all. Where have we come from? Where are the wounds and insecurities in our

lives and how do we react when something and someone touches them.

And where are we going?

Are we willing to be vulnerable enough to let God meet us in those broken places, and heal us? Are we willing to give up our dysfunctional, human ways of trying to preserve our status, and instead, accept what Christ has to offer us, knowing that we are loved, and that God is going to work on our behalf, in God's time and in God's ways?

We all are beloved people, created in the image of God, and immeasurably precious to God.

We don't have to live as slaves to our fears, or insecurities, or other people's opinions about us anymore.

We are children, sons and daughters of God.

(Show video: "You Say" by Lauren Daigle Official Music Video)

(Ideas for this sermon were provided through an article by Jenny Rae Anderson entitled "Hagar, the Disenfranchised, and the God who Sees")