

## Mid-Week Meditation for the week of September 27, 2020

Genesis 24:28-67

You may remember from last week, we talked about how Abraham sent his servant to the land of his father and made his servant swear an oath that he would follow God's leading in order to find Isaac a wife. You perhaps remember that Abraham's servant prayed that God's will would be, that any woman who he asked for a drink of water, and then that woman responded by providing the drink of water and, in addition, offering to water all of the camels in the servant's caravan; that would be the one that God had ordained to be the wife of Isaac. And then, you may remember that Abraham's servant gave Rebekah a golden nose ring and two golden bracelets. The servant asked Rebekah if there was room for him to spend the night at the home of her family. She said there was, and then Rebekah ran off to tell her family about the things that happened at the well.

That is the place where we pick up the story in today's lesson. Now as happens from time to time in the book of Genesis, the story of last week is largely retold in this passage that we have shared today. But we pick up the story where Rebekah has told her family about the man that she encountered at the well, who gave her expensive gifts for just offering him some water for him and for his camels. Now Rebekah's brother, whose name was Laban, looks at the bracelets and nose ring and hurries off to meet the wealthy visitor. When he got to the spring, and saw Abraham's servant standing by the well, he says, "Come you who are blessed by the Lord, why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels." So, Abraham's servant went with Laban, and Laban showed him where the camels would bed down for the night. Then Laban took Abraham's servant to the place where there was water to wash his feet. And then Laban showed Abraham's servant to the house where the food for the evening meal was waiting. But Abraham's servant said, "I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say." So, Laban said, "Then tell us." Abraham's servant then told them, "I am Abraham's servant. The Lord has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. God has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, and camels and donkeys. My master's wife, Sarah, has born him a son in her old age and he has given him everything he owns." And then he goes on to tell the whole story, of the last passage we shared, about the oath and the journey, and the test that Rebekah passed giving Abraham's servant a drink and watering his camels, and how Abraham's servant has now been led by God to believe that Rebekah was ordained to be the wife of Abraham's son, Isaac. So, Abraham's servant is asking Laban and Bethuel if they will allow for God's will to be fulfilled. And after Abraham's servant finished telling the whole story, he said to Bethuel, Rebekah's father, and Laban, Rebekah's brother, "Now, if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me, and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn. Laban had no answer. He and Bethuel recognized from the story Abraham's servant told, that this was from God. Who were they to say yes or no to this proposal that came from God? Then, Abraham's servant bowed down in thanks to the Lord for bringing success to his long journey. Next, he gave expensive

gifts to Rebekah and to Laban and Bethuel and Rebekah's mother. He gave gold and silver and clothes to Rebekah, and expensive gifts to the others. And then, they shared the meal that had been prepared. The next morning, Abraham's servant, thrilled that his mission had been accomplished, said to Rebekah's family, send me on my way, to my master. But Rebekah's family responded by saying, "Why not stay around for 10 days or so," presumably to allow Rebekah and her family to say their goodbyes. Because of the distance that was now going to separate them, it was very likely that they would never see their daughter again. But Abraham's servant said, "Do not detain me, now that the Lord has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way, that I may go to my master. In response to this request, they said, let us ask the girl. If she is willing to go, then so be it. And Rebekah said, "I will go." So, we will stop there for a moment, and reflect on what has happened in this passage. I think that it is safe to say that Rebekah's family had a pretty good idea about what Abraham's servant had on his mind. The gold nose ring and the two bracelets were evidence of that. Laban who we will learn later in Genesis, is a pretty materialistic and manipulative sort of person, responds with an exaggerated sense of hospitality toward Abraham's servant. Notice that it says that one of the things that caused Laban to go and greet Abraham's servant was the fact that he saw the golden gifts that had been given to Rebekah. Laban was very interested in what Abraham's servant had to say. He looked at the load of goods that Abraham's servant had on the backs of the camels, and he said, "Come, you who are blessed by the Lord. Why are we standing here?" Now Abraham's servant just wants to fulfill his oath and go home. And so, before the meal is served, he says that he wants to tell them what is on his mind. And of course, Laban, still thinking about golden nose rings and bracelets, is all ears. Now, we know that the story goes on. Abraham's servant tells Rebekah's family why he has come.

They would have known who Abraham was. Most had probably not met him, but they would certainly have known the story of his journey to Canaan. And it would have made sense to them why the servant was asking for Rebekah's family's pledge to marry Isaac. Rebekah was the granddaughter of Abraham's brother, Nahor, making Rebekah an appropriate bride for Isaac.

So, you might ask, why all the silver and Gold. Well, all the gifts were given, not so much to convince Rebekah's family to make the deal, but rather, to show that Abraham truly has been blessed by God. In those days, wealth was the ultimate measure of God's blessing. And Abraham's servant is clear, that all of Abraham's wealth has been given to Isaac, Rebekah's proposed husband. So that means that the abundance of Abraham's blessing now belongs to Isaac. The truth is, that if Rebekah agrees to this proposal, she will probably never see her family again, so it was extremely important to demonstrate to Rebekah's family that she will be cared for, and more importantly, as indicated by all the material gifts, her husband to be, knows God's blessing. It is also interesting how Bethuel and Laban react to this idea that Rebekah would become the betrothed of Isaac. They say, "This is from God, we can say nothing to you, one way or the other." After hearing the servant's story, and seeing all the evidence of Abraham's blessing, there is absolutely no doubt that this is God's plan, to the point where they

don't even have a say. My opinion is that there are two reasons for such confidence in the decision for Rebekah to go. First, Abraham, God's chosen, had made the proposal. Who are Laban and Bethuel to argue with God's chosen one. Second is, that they know they will not receive nearly as much of "God's blessing," the gold and the silver that Abraham's servant has, if Rebekah does not comply. Laban and Bethuel are definitely interested in taking some of that "blessing" off of Abraham's servant's hands, if you know what I mean. And so, this covenant likely is a covenant that is made partly with the motive of honoring God's plan, and partly with the motive of gaining material wealth. And if you stop and think about it, almost all decisions people make are made like that.

I have no proof of this, but it seems to me, that Rebekah's response to this whole situation, seems a little purer than her families. She receives gifts too, but as we will see next week, her adherence to this covenant seems to be a little more reverent than that of Laban and Bethuel. Abraham's servant is overjoyed to hear that his oath will be fulfilled, and that he will be able to bring joy to his master when he returns to Canaan. So, he is ready to get started on the long journey, bright and early in the morning. But Laban and Bethuel ask if he could wait ten days or so to accommodate the family's good byes. At that point, Abraham's servant says, do not detain me. This servant is so excited to bring joy to the master that he can't wait another moment to begin his journey. I think this servant is a model for how we are called to honor our master. His whole purpose is to bring success and joy to the purpose of his master. How is that different from the way we should live our faith to our great God? How is that different from our journey to bring honor to the sacrifice of our savior Jesus Christ?

It is interesting they only get around to asking Rebekah about this deal when it comes to the time of her departure. She does not appear to be involved in the go or not go part of the decision. But that is just how it worked back them. In the end, she said, "I will go."

And in the end, Laban and Bethuel received their quote "Blessing," and Rebekah received her share of that, quote, "Blessing" too. But she probably, after reviewing the whole situation concluded that this was God's blessing as evidenced by the call from Abraham, God's chosen. She could see that her husband to be, was abundantly blessed as evidenced by all the gifts. God's Will. God's blessing. She was not going to do better, and so the journey begins. Next week we will talk about the time when Rebekah and Isaac meet and are joined in marriage. Let us pray...