The sermon

Intro

Abraham was promised countless offspring. Those offspring wouldn't come through Ishmael. They'd come through Isaac. Miraculously, Abraham and Sarah were given Isaac in their old age. But Isaac doesn't have a wife. If there's going to be offspring, Isaac needs to find a wife.

This morning we'll learn how God orchestrated Isaac's marriage.

Body

Passage Focus

We'll walk through our lengthy passage. Then we'll draw some concluding applications.

READ 24:1-9

Point 1: An oath is made (24:1-9)

Abraham is old (24:1). He's about 137 at the time (Gen 17:17; 23:1).

"And the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things." – 24:1

This theme won't go away. God told Abraham to leave his homeland and promised *"I will bless you"* (Gen 12:2). God's been keeping his word for 62 years (Gen 12:4).

Assignment

Abraham has an assignment for his oldest and trusted servant (24:2): find Isaac a wife. Isaac's about 37 now (Gen 17:17; 23:1).

Abraham has one concern: ***"you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell"*** (24:3). Isaac's wife can't be a Canaanite.

Abraham has another concern: ***"you…will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac"*** (24:3-4). Isaac's wife has to come from Abraham's relatives.

His servant has a concern: ***"Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came"*** (24:5)? What if isn't willing to come back with me to Canaan? Do I then return with Isaac? ***"the woman"*** indicates there's one particular woman for Isaac. It isn't keep trying till you find a willing woman.

Abraham's third concern: ***"See to it that you do not take my son back there"*** (24:6). We're not told why Abraham prohibits Isaac from traveling.

Why no Canaanite wife for Isaac?

1. Likely because the Canaanites were sinful people.

When Abraham's descendants took the land they would dispossess a sinful people (Gen 15:16). Israelites were later forbidden to marry Canaanites because the Canaanites spouse would turn God's people to serve false gods (Deut 7:3-4).

2. Another reason is implied in 24:7.

"he [the LORD] ***will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there."*** – 24:7

How does Abraham know an angel is going to go before his servant in the wife quest? It appears Abraham possesses this knowledge about the angel because God told Abraham in an unrecorded encounter. This suggests God told Abraham no Canaanite wife for Isaac.

Oath sworn

Abraham concedes the possibility ***"the woman"*** might say no (24:8). If so, the servant has fulfilled his part of the oath and isn't bound to bring the woman by force.

Summary

Abraham's oldest and trusted servant is tasked with visiting Abraham's homeland and finding a wife for Isaac. The LORD will send an angel to prosper the mission. There's a possibility the woman will say no.

READ 24:10-21

Point 2: Is she the one? (24:10-21)

The servant departs with ten camels and gifts (24:10). They arrive in the evening, ***"the time when women go out to draw water"*** (24:11). Ancient women, lacking conveniences we possess, gathered water for the family and animals.

Prayer request

The servant asks for God's success on his mission (24:12). For God to provide Isaac's wife would be for God to show ***"steadfast love"*** to Abraham (24:12). Steadfast love includes providing a wife for a man's son.

But how is the servant going to determine who's the wife for Isaac?

Believing that God has appointed one particular woman for Isaac (24:14), the servant's request is when I say this (***"Please let down your jar that I may drink"***) let the woman who says ***"Drink, and I will water your camels"*** be the one you've appointed.

The servant expects to find the appointed woman at this well.

Prayer answered

"Before he had finished speaking" Rebekah appears = immediate response to prayer.

We're told what the servant doesn't know. Rebekah was the granddaughter of Nahor (24:15). Nahor was Abraham's brother. Rebekah met the country and kindred requirements.

The servant observes a young woman of marriageable age named Rebekah who was extremely beautiful who never had sexual relations with a man (***"whom no man had known"*** – 24:16). The fact that he ran (24:17) indicates he thinks she might be the one.

The servant asks her for water (24:17). So proceeds to say, ***"I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking"*** (24:19). She replies just as the servant requested the appointed woman would reply! Rebekah drawing water for ten camels (24:20) has prompted discussion. Some suggest 200-300 gallons of water for camels after a long journey. A lot of work. Maybe she utterly exhausted herself to the full? Maybe the camels had drank water at stops on the way and it was significantly less than 200-300 gallons? Regardless, the picture is a strong, hard-working woman who was willing to serve a total stranger.

At this point the servant's asking himself, is this mission completed (24:21)? Is she the one?

Summary

The servant reaches the city of Nahor. He makes an interesting prayer request to discern the right woman. He encounters a woman who behaves in accordance with his prayer request. We're told she's Abraham's kindred.

READ 24:22-33

Point 3: She's the one (24:22-33)

The servant's dying to know if she meets the kindred qualification (24:23). Rebekah reveals she's Nahor's granddaughter (24:24).

Praise

The servant responds in praise. Sometimes spontaneous praise is appropriate. Do you ever find yourself stopping what you're doing to praise God?

Bowing on his knees, he blessed God (he praised God, he spoke well of God) because of what God did for Abraham (24:26-27). In directing the servant to Rebekah, God had acted in steadfast love and faithfulness towards Abraham. God's committed, loyal love acts. God's faithfulness acts.

Family alerted

Rebekah's excited to hear this. So she sprints home to tell her household (24:28). Rebekah's brother is Laban, whom we'll encounter later.

Laban is immediately taken by the gold and Rebekah's words (24:30) and invites the servant in (24:31). Commentators harp on Laban's greed for possessions, but it appears the words excite him too.

Textbook hospitality. A place to stay. Food for the camels. Water to wash his feet. Food to eat. But no eating until he says what's on his heart (24:33)

Summary

There's confirmation: she's Abraham's kindred. God has acted in steadfast love and faithfulness by providing a wife for Isaac. Rebekah tells her family.

READ 24:34-49

Point 4: Will family let her leave? (24:34-49)

The assignment

The servant rehearses Abraham's blessing: animals, riches, servants (24:35). And the birth of Isaac in Sarah's old age (24:36). Rebekah's getting a bunch of stuff if she marries Isaac!

The servant recalls the oath: Isaac's wife must come from Abraham's relatives, not the Canaanites (24:37-38). But there's a possibility the appointed woman wouldn't say yes (24:39). But the servant was assured that ***"The LORD…will send his angel with you and prosper your way"*** (24:40).

When he found the woman, if Abraham's family was unwilling to let her go, the servant would be released from his oath (24:41).

The meeting

The servant rehearses his prayer about the appointed woman (24:44) and how Rebekah behaved exactly how he prayed (24:42-46). And how she belonged to Nahor's family (24:47). So I blessed God ***"who had led me by the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son"*** (24:48).

Decision time

The servant then calls on the family to decide. Will you show steadfast love and faithfulness to Abraham (24:49)?

Summary

God is intimately involved in everything. The blessing of Abraham. The birth of Isaac. The encounter with Rebekah, God's appointed. Will the family or Rebekah stand in the way of God's will?

READ 24:50-61

Point 5: Rebekah's offspring will reign (24:50-61)

Family's response

Laban and Bethuel are in favor: ***"take her and go"*** (24:51). They say, ***"The thing has come from the LORD…let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken"*** (24:50-51).

It's tough to gauge where they stand with God, because Abraham came from a family of people who *"served other gods"* (Josh 24:2). Is this the first they've heard of the LORD? Do they think the LORD is one of many equal deities? It seems like they believe the LORD orchestrated these events, but the extent of their understanding of the LORD isn't stated.

The family's yes prompts the servant's praise (24:52).

Urgency

The family want to keep Rebekah another ten days (24:55), but the servant says, ***"Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master"*** (24:56).

The family asks Rebekah and she says, ***"I will go"*** (24:58). So they send her away with some familiar faces: her nurse and young women (24:59, 61).

Prophetic blessing

"Our sister, may you become thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate him!" – 24:60

They probably don't know the extent of what they're saying. They speak a prophetic blessing, wishing upon Rebekah what God has already promised to Abraham.

From Rebekah's descendants will come thousands of descendants. And one particular offspring. ***"may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate <u>him</u>!" "him"*** = one particular offspring will be hated: Jesus. And he will possess the gate of the people who hate him.

The gate was the entry point of the city and its defense. When the gate was broken down, the city was left defenseless. If you possessed the gate, you possessed the city. God's saying Jesus will conquer his enemies and take their land.

This recalls **22:17** where, after being willing to sacrifice Isaac, the LORD promised Abraham, *"And your offspring shall possess the gate of <u>his</u> enemies."* The blessing that comes to the nations through Abraham ultimately comes to the nations through his singular offspring, Jesus. Jesus will have enemies. He'll be opposed. He'll conquer them. Blessing comes in full after Jesus has subdued his enemies!

Summary

The family is willing. Rebekah is willing. From Rebekah's descendants will come Jesus!

READ 24:62-67

Point 6: Mission accomplished (24:62-67)

The scene shifts to Isaac (24:62).

Rebekah, the servant, and their entourage have arrived (24:63). Isaac is now the servant's master (24:65). Abraham's blessing has been transferred to Isaac. ***"So she took her veil and covered herself"*** (24:65) = proper protocol for a betrothed woman. The servant tells Isaac what's happened (24:66) and the two become one flesh in marriage (24:67).

Isaac was grieving Sarah's death. Isaac is now comforted by the arrival of Rebekah (24:67).

Summary

God's purpose comes to pass. Abraham offspring will begin to multiply through Isaac and Rebekah.

Point 7: Know God and worship him

1. God blesses his people (24:1, 35-36).

Abraham was blessed in unique ways. If you're a Christian, you're under God's blessing. To come into relationship with God through faith in Jesus is to come under God's blessing.

Do you have eyes to see?

2. God sends angels before us (24:7) and with us (24:40).

Hebrews 1:14 speaks of angels as *"ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation."* To come into relationship with God through faith in Jesus is to experience the aid of angels. Things are happening behind the scenes!

3. God acts in steadfast love and faithfulness (24:27, 49).

God's steadfast love speaks of the way God has freely committed himself to us for the long haul. He will never leave us nor forsake us. Given this committed love, he acts for us in kind ways. Every day of our life (Ps 23:6; "mercy" = steadfast love).

God's faithfulness speaks of the fact that God is consistent, dependable, reliable. He is keeping his word. He will always keep his word.

Do you have eyes to see?

4. God orchestrates the events of our lives, such as encounters between people.

The servant uses language like God granting success (24:12), God prospering his way (24:21, 40, 42, 56), God *"led me by the right way"* (24:48), the woman God *"appointed"* for Isaac (24:14, 44). Laban and Bethuel use the language, *"The thing has come from the LORD"* (24:50).

The picture is a God who's active in human affairs. Actively directing our lives in good ways. One reason we find ourselves in the same church with one another is because God has appointed it and directed us here!

Do you have eyes to see?

5. God wins (24:60).

We're reminded once again Jesus will possess the gates of his enemies.

Jesus has enemies. Those enemies oppose God's word. Those enemies oppose Jesus' people. Those enemies will be toppled in God's time.

The takeaway is whatever ideologies exist in America today that stand in opposition to God, those ideologies will come and end. They will be trampled under the feet of Jesus! Christian, you can rest in the fact that Jesus will win! One day, you will forever be on the right side of history! Jesus winning is part of the good news!

Are you comforted by the fact that Jesus wins?

6. Knowledge of God should move us to bow, speak well of God, give thanks (24:26-27, 48, 52).

The servant recognizes God's active, good hand. So he gets on his knees. And he speaks well of God. The people of Romans chapter one darkened themselves because they failed to honor God and give him thanks (Rom 1:21). One way we should continually relate to God is through respecting his status as God: Creator, Ruler, Judge, Savior. And giving thanks for the good things he does for us. Whether food or shelter or friends or family or wisdom in his word.

Practical question: do I regularly bow before God, speak well of God, and give God thanks?

Look for reasons to esteem God. Look for reasons to thank him.

Conclusion

We're reminded again that Jesus will possess the gate of his enemies. The Christian hope is Jesus' defeat of his enemies and an unending kingdom of God under Jesus' rule.

In order to possess the nations, God the Son, Jesus, first had to willingly obey the Father by subjecting himself to a human body and death on a cross. First the cross, then the crown. Humiliation before exultation. God raised Jesus from the dead, confirming the promises.

What does this have to do with us? Abraham and his offspring were promised everlasting possession of the land. Who are these offspring? Those who repent of their sins and place their faith in Jesus. Through Jesus, and only through Jesus, we become Abraham's spiritual offspring who live in the land forever and ever.

What land? The new heavens and new earth. A place without sin and death and suffering. No more fears! No more tears! No more rebellion! A land where everyone loves God and submits to his rule. A world where you'll never be sinned against again!

Jesus came to rescue the nations from the curse, purchasing a people to reign with him, dying as a substitute such that whoever believes will be rescued from the curse: sin and death.

Do you believe? Do the promises belong to you? Are you on the victor's side?

If not, confess your sins to God. Thank God for sending Jesus. Ask God for forgiveness. Ask God for help to follow him. Trust that God forgives all who believe.

Tell us if you believe.