Today marks the third Sunday we have studied Abram and we will be studying him for a few more Sundays. Abram, who later became Abraham, plays a major role in the Bible. Last week Pastor Richard spoke on the covenant God established with Abram. Look back to Genesis 15:18 where we read, “On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites”. The only tribes missing were the parasites!

A month ago, we learned in our study of Noah that a covenant is an oath or promise established between two people or groups. In Genesis 12, God promised Abram a special land, many descendants and that he would be a blessing. For his part of the covenant, Abram had to act on faith, believe God and obey God. Abram did all of these things!

In today’s lesson, Abram and Sarai had been waiting for ten long years for Sarai to become pregnant so she could give birth to their heir. This time period wouldn’t have been so difficult if they were young people. But they weren’t young! As a matter of fact, they were elderly. Look to Gen 16:16, “Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram”. Can you imagine? My grandfather was 49 when my mother was born and I thought that was ancient!! The Bible tells us that Sarah was ten years younger than Abram in Gen 17:17.

Look back in your Bible to Genesis 15:2-6: “But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring and a member of my household will be my heir”. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and number the stars, if you are able to number them. Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be”. And he believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness”. Abram expressed his exasperation with the delay of God’s promise and God reassured him that his offspring would not be a servant of his household like Eliezer but rather his own flesh and blood! God saw Abram, heard his frustration and God cared for him in giving him reassurance.

God understood Abram and Sarai’s impatience and frustration. In God’s sovereignty, He wanted Ishmael to be born. So, the delay of Isaac’s birth occurred. We learn an important lesson through this extended time of waiting for the proper heir for Abram and Sarai. Here’s the lesson: God sees us where we are and cares for us as we are. God sees us where we are and cares for us as we are. Please turn in your bulletins to the middle and you will see the point of the lesson: God sees us where we are and cares for us as we are. God saw Abram and Sarai, heard their frustration with the lack of progress for having an heir and demonstrated care for them.
God does this for us, too! You might struggling with a chronic health problem, or dealing with a messy family situation or stuck in a difficult job in which you don’t really have an out or you might have lost a loved one recently. Whatever hardship or difficulty you are experiencing today, God sees you where you are and cares for you as you are! Don’t ever forget that! Maybe you’re not struggling with any kind of hardship today and life is moving along very smoothly. Great! Praise God! Count your blessings! But we all know that trials and problems can erupt suddenly and seemingly out of nowhere. So, when that happens, remember this point: God sees you where you are and cares for you as you are! This is true even when:

1. We get impatient and take matters into our own hands. Look in your text in Gen 16:1-4

“Now Sarai, Abram’s wife had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, “Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant and gave her to Abram, her husband as a wife. And he went in to Hagar and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress”.

Frustrated with her inability to get pregnant, Sarai gave her servant Hagar to Abram and Hagar conceived. According to Assyrian marriage contracts and the Babylonian law code, Sarai did not do anything unusual or illegal in taking this action. She simply found a surrogate in order to have a baby! Today, we allow women in our country to serve as surrogates. Many years ago a young woman in our church did this for a friend. She gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. Today, modern medicine makes it possible to avoid sexual intercourse between the surrogate and man. Sarai became impatient with God and His promise and took matters into her own hands! She clearly jumped the gun in terms of God’s will.

We see other examples in scripture where biblical figures jumped the gun. Saul, the first king of Israel, sinned against God by offering a sacrifice only a priest was supposed to offer. He only had to wait a brief period of time but he failed to wait. He acted instead and offered a sacrifice only a priest could offer. Turn in your Bible to 1st Samuel 13:8: “He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, “Bring the burnt offering here to me and the peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him.” Look down to vs.13 “And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom will not continue. The Lord has sought a man after his own heart and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you”.

Have you ever prayed for something, become impatient with God because you didn’t get what you prayed for and then you took matters into your own hands? I did this when we bought our first home. We had been renting a nice condo in Sacramento and I got tired of playing by the rules of the condominium association. So, Sally and I contacted a realtor in our church and
within a very brief time, we had made an offer on a home. As I look back on the whole matter, we really had no business buying a home. We knew we were not going to stay in Sacramento for a very long time. Interest rates at the time were sky high. But we ignored these realities and bought a home that we really couldn’t afford. It turned out to be the greatest financial mistake I have ever made in my life. I made this mistake because I acted impulsively and did not wait upon the Lord. Perhaps you have made a similar kind of mistake.

We get into trouble when we get impatient and take matters into our own hands. But even when we do, God sees us where we are and cares for us as we are! In spite of my impulsive behavior in buying a home we never should have bought, Sally and I knew God still loved us and was going to care for us! He did! God sees us where we are and cares for us as we are.

2. We blame God and/or people for our problems. Look in your text again. See Gen 16:4-5

“And he went in to Hagar and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!”

When Hagar discovered her pregnancy she looked down on Sarai. Sarai blamed Abram. Listen to the way the Message paraphrase puts this verse, “Sarai told Abram, “It’s all your fault that I’m suffering this abuse. I put my maid in bed with you and the minute she knows she’s pregnant, she treats me like I’m nothing. May God decide which of us is right”. “You decide” said Abram. “Your maid is your business”. Sarai was abusive to Hagar and Hagar ran away.

We observe that Sarai blames Abram for the abuse she suffered from Hagar. Sarai reacted to Hagar’s contempt by abusing her and Hagar ran away from her.

When things don’t go our way, we have a tendency to blame God or others, don’t we? Dustin Armstrong shares how he blamed God at first for a tragedy that occurred in his family: “Before I decided to live for Christ, I’d party with friends. I’d drink, act stupid and end up making a fool of myself. As for God, I thought he was for weak people. I thought Christians who always talked about God were crazy. Then something happened my sophomore year that changed everything. My little sister Ashley, who was a freshman at the time, was riding in a car driven by one of her friends. Worried about getting home late, Ashley’s friend started speeding. The car hit a rough railroad track and flipped over. Ashley soon lay in a hospital on life support, in a coma, very close to death. At first, I was angry with God for what happened to my sister. I shouted to heaven, “If you are who you say you are, how could you let this happen? Even though my sister managed to survive, we were told her brain injury was so severe she probably never walk or talk again. But in the months that followed the accident, I helped coach her along as she struggled to stand and then, eventually, take a few tiny steps. I also listened in amazement as she began to put words together and form sentences. Slowly, very slowly, she was getting better. And slowly, very slowly, I was starting to change. Along with realizing how important family was to me, I also thought a lot about God and his place in everything that had happened. Instead of blaming him for it all, I began to thank him for my sister’s life and for my whole family. I also began to see that all those things I’d lived for- like
partying and acceptance by the popular crowd weren’t really important. Even sports no longer seemed as important as they used to. Instead, I started going to youth group and really enjoying it. I liked having conversations with my friends about God and Christianity. I wanted to know as much as I could about following God. During my junior year, I committed my life to Christ”.

Through this crisis in his family, this young man came to see what was really important in life. It wasn’t partying or being accepted by the popular crowd or sports but surrendering to the Lord and committing his life to Jesus.

Are you blaming God or someone else for problems in your life? Give your problems up to God! You can do this because God sees you where you are and cares for you as you are. This is true even when:

3. **We try and run away from our problems.** Notice how Hagar tried to run away from her problems. Look in the text in vs.6b “Then Sarai dealt harshly with her and she fled from her. The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai.” The angel of the Lord said to her, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude”…So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me”.

Hagar ran away from Abram and Sarai; she was running back to her home in Egypt when the angel of the Lord found her. The angel instructed her to return to Sarai which she did eventually; for we read that she bore Abram a son in vs.15.

Hagar did what many of us do when we get upset: we flee, we physically leave the problem situation! But though leaving a difficult situation might diffuse the tension, it never really solves the problem, does it? We still have to confront the issues which cause and prolong the problems. Hagar returned to face Sarai and Abram again.

What prompted Hagar to return and face her detractors? First, the Lord told her that her offspring would be so numerous that they could not be counted. Second, the angel convinced her that God had truly heard her affliction. She was instructed to name her son, “Ishmael” which means, “God hears”. Finally, she calls God “You are a God of seeing” in vs.13 for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me”. In essence, Hagar returned to Abram and Sarai because she believed God saw her where she was and cared for her as she was.

When you’re tempted to run away from your problems, remember Hagar’s experience with God. God revealed himself to her in a special way through the encounter with the angel of the Lord. God can do the same for us! Remember, God sees us where we are and cares for us as we are!
The greatest evidence of this truth is the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches us “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8) This verse teaches us that God saw our sinful predicament, that we could do nothing to save ourselves. So God sent Jesus to us to die for our sins. He saw us where we are and cared for us as we are.

Remember this truth even when you get impatient and try to take matters into your own hands or when you blame God or other people for your problems or when you try and run away from your problems. **God sees you where you are and care for you as you are. Let us pray.**