

Sermon

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Happy Father's Day to all the Dads and Grand-dads out there today.

Father's Day cards are some of my favorites often making light of the chores Dads have to do to keep the household going...looking through them to find just the right one for my Dad was kind of a fun task because to me my Dad was everything – greatest dad ever. He was my best friend and playmate growing up. In fact my friends would come by to see if I could play and the next question was always - is your Dad home? You see, they may have wanted to play with me a little but what they really wanted was to play with my Dad.

Being a parent is the most important job we have, for those of us who were blessed with children. Blessed with children...something we say and hear often. Yet for some, that blessing never seems to come and it leads to great suffering trying to conceive a child. Many go down the road of infertility treatments – painful, time consuming, expensive and sometimes failed road. For young couples in this situation, each time someone asks...when are you two going to have a baby? Innocently said by an unsuspecting, unknowing friend – feels like knives driven right through the heart. Each time they flip through social media and see another friend celebrating a pregnancy or birth, again, the pain is intense. Questions like why me? Why us? Why aren't we deemed good enough to be "blessed" by God with a child? Terrible comments like – if it was meant to be for

you, it would and God will give you a baby if it is God's will. And the question of well, God gave a baby to an active drug addict so what's that all about?

Our scripture from Genesis confronts the challenge and pain that infertility and the intense need to have a child can bring. A reminder of the scripture read today says this...

12So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" 13The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' 14Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son." 15But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."[

Sarah laughed to herself...not because it was funny but because her entire adult life was spent trying to have a child...praying to God, likely trying every known method around, to conceive a child...and now, now that she is an old woman – after she had given up hope years before, she is going to carry a child? So maybe a laugh, maybe an eye roll...who knows what she did...Abraham laughed at the thought of it too...but it's Sarah who gets in trouble with God. It was always considered the woman's fault then if pregnancy did not come. Many thought the woman was cursed, or did something to anger God. Well Sarah doesn't trust that her body will not fail her so she tells her husband to have sex with their slave Hagar and he does...and she does conceive. But so does Sarah, just as God said she would.

Genesis 21: 1-7

The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. 2Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. 3Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. 4And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6Now Sarah said, “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.” 7And she said, “Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

Infertility is a painful struggle but there is help available. There is a website called Resolve ([Learn | RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association](#)) that offers support and resources to couples in this struggle. The following was written by a woman named Elizabeth U.

What you don't know about infertility is that it feels like you are living a double life. You have the “self” that you present to the world and you have the “self” that is slowly fading away in the shadows, enduring what feels like endless obstacles. Infertility is a 24/7 minefield of triggers that seem to shift and move with the wind. It is impossible to explain, and there is so much that you don't know.

What you don't know about infertility is that there is a woman standing on her front lawn at 9 pm waiting for a shipment of [medication](#) with a flashlight because she knows her house number is hard to see, and the next steps in her [IVF](#) protocol

depend on making sure the medication is delivered. There is a woman spending HOURS on the phone working through issues with insurance companies, scheduling appointments, deciphering diagnosis codes, and following-up on unanswered questions. She jumps every single time the phone rings because it could be a result or a critical callback. There is a woman waking up at 5:30 am in the dead of winter to go get bloodwork done that she knows won't have a good outcome. That same woman also has to go to work that day, present at a huge meeting, and is thinking of what shirt or blazer she can wear that will cover her bruises from having been stuck with a needle so many times.

What you don't know about infertility is that while there are many wonderful clinicians, healthcare, and office staff, you will endure a barrage of insensitivity and gaslighting by those that are supposed to help you. There is a woman who goes into an appointment with so much hope and trust, is asked if she wants to hear the heartbeat of her baby only to be told in the next breath, *"Good thing we couldn't hear it – doesn't seem to be doing so well anyway."* There is also a woman who has to go into the hospital for yet another D&C and has to state what she would like done with the fetal tissue once her uterus has been emptied. She didn't know that her baby was fetal tissue to be disposed of.

What you don't know about infertility is that people will say things to you like *"Keep your feet up the first 12 weeks next time – you need to rest."* Did her walking around cause her miscarriage? Another fun one: surprise bills that range anywhere from a \$50 co-pay to \$5,000 and if you don't pay within a certain time frame, it will delay your cycle or you'll be told you cannot get the results until

everything is “squared away.” She didn’t know steps in her family-building process could be held hostage.

What you don’t know about infertility is that there is a woman that silently wishes for a healthy baby every time the clock hits 11:11. This woman wants nothing more than to go back to her old life – her life where she could trust her body and not feel like a stranger in her own skin.

That woman is me. And now that you have met me, keep me in mind when you are trying to support someone just like me. I just want to live free, outside of the shadows, and #WeCanAll do things to help me, and other women like me, get there.

So perhaps Sarah was living a double life too and her laughter was covering up decades of pain she felt, how she felt she failed her husband and her family – so much so that she told her husband to be with another woman and have a child with her.

So if you are experiencing infertility, we see you, we love you and we support you...and so does God. Lean into your faith, share your experiences and check out the Resolve website – it has great information on not only where to go for help but how to help those who are going through this struggle.

Let us pray...Lord, see all those who long for a child. Be with them in their pain and answer their prayers. For those who are unable to afford treatments, help resources to be made available to them. For those who have

lost pregnancies time and time again, hopes lifted, hopes dashed...help them to remain strong in their belief for a baby. Surround them with your love and strengthen their relationship with one another, even on the darkest nights, the painful moments. And give them joy in their love, helping them to feel that they are a beautiful family as they are. In Jesus Name. Amen