

El Roi The God Who Sees Me

The Names of God part II series

by Chris Famisarn

Oh, wow. What a week it has been. I know Bill thanked everybody. But personally, as your pastor, thank you to the many volunteers and the kids. The kids and the parents and everyone that made this last week successful. This is my favorite week of the year. It is my favorite week of the year. And I just. It's so awesome to see God moving in everybody's lives this last week.

Now, let's get to today's sermon, El Roi: the God Who Sees Me.

Last year about this time, there was a company who decided to have a office retreat, hiking trip. A Hiking trip. And so they went to go climb, I think it was called Mount Shavano. It's in Colorado in the San Isabel National Forest. And there was an unnamed worker, they didn't want to be named, who had to be rescued because this co worker had been abandoned by his colleagues. Now, the mountain that they were climbing was over 14,230ft.

Now, there was 15 hikers in this group and they split into two teams, one that headed to the summit while the other ascended to a saddle just before turning back. And while 14. Okay, 14 of the hikers descended safely. An unnamed person continued to the summit and reached it about around 11:30. However, as this individual started to head down the mountain, this person became disoriented and also his colleagues had picked up the markers that would have told him where to go on the way back down. And so of course, this man was confused and didn't quite understand where he was going. And oh boy, what a place to be at that point.

Well, when he failed to check in, his colleagues, of course, reported him missing. You see, he did try to use his cell phone to send a pin where his location is so that they could send a team. But then they advised him to return to the summit to get to the correct trail. Now, after getting this advice, guess

what happens. There is a severe thunderstorm or freezing rain and high winds that made him even more disoriented and eventually he loses his cell phone signal completely. Well, at 9:00, when he had not returned, a search party was sent. Rescue teams went to the area where they could and they found him, luckily enough, in a gully near a drainage ditch. He was airlifted to a hospital where he was found to be in, quote, stable condition.

Now, this particular hiker had fallen over 20 times and yet he still expressed his gratitude for being able to call and get help despite this very unfortunate, unfortunate situation. Now, Rescue officials noted that his recovery was fortunate given the challenging circumstances.

Awkward office dynamics when he got back, wouldn't you think? Being left alone on a mountain all by himself in the rain and also taking the markers that sent him home. Now, have you ever been alone? Have you ever been left behind? Have you ever been cast out? Have you ever been left by yourself to fend for yourself today?

I want to go a book. I want to go to the book of Genesis, chapter 16. It's a story that many of us are probably familiar with, Genesis, chapter 16. Now, before we actually start reading this, though, we need to have a little bit of backstory and context. And just like I mentioned last week, although we were in Exodus, this story again, goes back to, has its origins with Abraham. And in chapter 12, God reaches out again to Abraham and calls him to leave his home and follow God. And the Lord said to Abraham, in verse chapter 12, it says, Go from your country, your people, and your father's household to the land. I will show you. He's telling him to leave his family to go to a different land. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Now, at this time, how old was Abram? 75 years old. How old was his wife? 65. And yet God tells him, you're going to be the father of many people. Ladies, if you're 65 years old, would you like to have a child at that point? I think it's a collective. Absolutely not. Right? That just sounds exhausting. Number one, at

65 now, 10 years go by between this time that God calls Abram to go to a different land. And here is where the story picks up, okay? Genesis, chapter 16. Now, Sarai. And by the way, before Abraham and Sarah, their later names, they were known as Abram and Sarai. Okay? Now, Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And if you're Sarah at this point, you're 65 now, roughly 75 years old. In many ways, you know, not having kids today would be. It's unfortunate, especially if you wanted some. But for Sarah, this wasn't just unfortunate, this was disastrous. This was horrible. Number one, she would not be able to give an heir to Abraham. And also, she probably was looked at with vileness, and how could you? What's wrong with you?

So continuing on, verse one. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar. So she said to Abram, the Lord has kept me from having children. Go sleep with my Slave, perhaps I can build a family through her. And Abram agreed to what Sarai said. How do you think this is going to turn out? Y' all are chuckling because you know where this goes. Oh, boy.

So verse three, after Abram had been living in Canaan 10 years, Sarai took his wife, took her Egyptian slave, Hagar, and gave her to her husband to be his wife. And he slept with Hagar and she conceived. Let's pause right there. Is this what God had in mind? No. Okay, I'm going to say this. **Human intervention in God's plans can cause negative ripple effects.** Right?

Human intervention in God's plan causes negative ripple effects. When things are not going the way we like, we try to maybe help God sometimes, Right? And when we try to help God, do things usually go well? Not when it's going to God's process. And again, you know, we look at Sarah's perspective, we kind of understand where she's coming from. Yet there was nobody here to inherit or care for them, Right? She felt shame. Now, it was common at this point to do this. Okay, I'm not saying it's right, but back then, that's what was understood. It was culturally, it was okay for them to do that. Now, if you're Hagar as well, though, if you are Hagar, how would you feel? You're a slave. Your mistress, however you want to describe Sarah, gives you to her husband against your will. You are now essentially reduced to being someone to

produce a child. She had no choice in the matter against her own will. So she produces a child. She gets pregnant.

Let's go back. Verse 4. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to, what? Despise her mistress. Verse 5. Then Sarai said to Abram, you are responsible. Oh, boy. You are responsible for the wrong. I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms. And now that she knows she is pregnant, she despairs, despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me. So Abram, verse 6, responds, Your slave is in your hands. Do with her whatever you think best. So how did Sarah mistreat? How did Sarah treat Hagar? She mistreated her. And what does she do? Hagar flees. So Sarah allows Abraham to go with Hagar, gets pregnant, and she starts to act disrespectful, rude. Sarah gets mad. She accuses Abraham, who started it and acquiesced to it. Right? Now, does this sound familiar? Is there ever a couple, maybe that. Maybe they had an argument? How about Adam and Eve? When they go and meet God, what does Adam do. He throws Eve under the bus. This woman who you gave to me, she influenced me. And yet, where was he when she was eating the fruit? He was standing right next to her. So he went along with the whole plan. And when things turn bad, he loses his spine. Okay, Now Sarah's mistreatment is so bad of Hagar that she runs away.

Verse 7. And the angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert. It was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said to Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going? I'm running away from my mistress. Sarai, she answered. And the angels of the Lord told her, go back to your mistress and submit to her. And the angel added, I will increase your descendants so much so that you will be too numerous to count. And so what's interesting here is that it's one of the first times that God directly recognizes a woman by her name. God calls her Hagar prior to Eve is mentioned. But God does not directly call her Eve, right? This is the first time. And think about this too. She's not an Israelite. She's not a Hebrew, she is an Egyptian. God cares for her and says, your descendants are going to be so numerous you can't count all of them. Did God ever make a promise to somebody else, to you about that? Abraham, in fact.

11 the angel of Lord said to her, you are now pregnant. You will give birth to a son. You will name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man. His hand will be against everyone and everyone one's hand against him. And he will live in hostility toward all of his brothers. It's already implied that he's gonna have some problems with his brother. Hint, hint.

Verse 13. She gave him this name to the Lord who spoke to her. You are the God who sees me, El Roi. She's in the wilderness. She's by a spring, and she feels abandoned. And yet God personally goes and calls her by name and says, basically, I see you. I know who you are. I know what you have been through and are going right? I will not abandon you.

So Hagar, verse 15. And then after that, I have now. She then says, I have now seen the one who sees me. This is why the well was called Bear Lehoi Roi. It is still there between Kadesh and Beryl. So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave him the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. And Abraham was 86 years old when Hagar bore him. Ishmael.

Now, here's a couple of things, okay? Number one, **fear clouds our judgment**. Okay? Fear clouds our judgment. I think Sarah had a bunch of fear recognizing, well, who's going to care for us? We need a son or a daughter to care for us. And in her desperation to try to fix things, in her fear, her judgment was very clouded. She gives her servant, her slave, to Abraham. And as we're going to discover, it is not a happy household, but as well for Hagar. She's so fearful, she just runs away in anger. What is she going to do? How could this happen to her? Now, again, **Hagar is also the first one to call God by name**. Imagine that in the Bible, chapter 16. Only in chapter 16, where we see Hagar describes the one who sees me. God knows who I am. God doesn't abandon me.

All right, let's jump over to chapter 20. Hagar recognizes that she's not invisible. Chapter 20, verse 8. The plot thickens. So let's see. 20. Now we see that. Sorry, not 20. Verse 21. My bad, my bad. Chapter 21. So Isaac now is born. Okay? God had promised and fulfilled the promise. Isaac is born. And in

verse 8, the child grew and was weaned. So he's probably about 3 years old at this point. And on the day that Isaac was weaned, Abraham held a great feast. Okay, they recognized it. But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abram was mocking. And she said to Abraham, get rid of that slave woman and her son. That woman's son will never share an inheritance with my son. Isaac, you recognize as well that neither Abraham or Sarah ever call her by her name. She's just a slave. How do you think she feels now?

Verse 11. Abraham has to reconcile with this because it's his son. The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. But God said to him, don't be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you. Because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the slave into a nation also because he is your what, offspring? So the promise still holds as well. Not just for Isaac, but also for Ishmael.

Verse 14. Early the next morning, Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He sent them on her shoulders and sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and watered and wandered in the desert of Beersheba. You would think that Abraham would give her little more than a skin of water and some food straight into the wilderness in the desert. Verse 15. When the water of skin is gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. She went off about a bow shot away maybe a hundred yards. For she thought, I cannot watch the boy die. And she sat there and began to sob. This is the second time she's been sent away into the desert. The water is gone, the food is gone, and she leaves her son underneath because she's too afraid. She cannot watch her son suffer and expire. How do you think she's feeling? She's been abandoned.

And yet verse 17, God heard the boy crying and the angel of God. And when it says angel of God, that's actually another way of saying God. Okay? God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, what is the matter, Hagar? Again he calls her by what her name. Don't be afraid. God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up, take him by the hand, for I will make him into a

great nation. And then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. And so she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. And God was with the boy as he grew. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

And so we see that God is not just going to care for God's own people. God loves and cares for what we would consider the outsiders. Because she was an Egyptian. Of course by then you know this is the start of what we would say, the lineage of Abraham. But still Abraham and Sarah did not even have the decency to call her Hagar. In fact, Sarah says that slave woman. And when you're a slave, what are you? You're essentially an object for your use, whatever you want. And when you're of no use, you can then be discarded. You are not invisible is what God is trying to tell Hagar. I see you. In fact, I call you by your first name. And God again. He promises that you will be okay. Your son will be the head of a great nation.

But here we see that God's love and support has no what? **God's love and support has no limits.** Do we ever try to put limits on God's love? Let's be honest, we do. Especially it's with people, if we don't like or they're different from us. God's love and support has no limits. Imagine again, you're Hagar. You're being abandoned in the wilderness. You're there a second time. Many would ask, where are you, God? Where are you? And Hagar promises, sorry, God promises Hagar that everything will be okay. Sarah became angry with Ishmael and Hagar and essentially tells Abraham to get rid of them. Ishmael has lost his inheritance from Abraham, but God still promises and sees and blesses Ishmael.

Here we see now, okay, I want you to think about this. We see that there's a journey that takes place. A child is about to die. Divine intervention takes place, and then there's a solution followed by a promise. Think about this. **Ishmael and Hagar's story is a precursor to Mount Moriah.** And what happens on Mount Moriah? God calls Abraham and Isaac to take a journey. And what does God ask Abraham to do? To sacrifice his son. Now, those of

you who know this story, God, Isaac doesn't. I mean, God, Abraham doesn't actually sacrifice him, but they go on a journey. They take the provisions. And just as. Just as Abraham is about to kill Isaac, there's divine intervention, a solution, and a promise again, further showing that God did not abandon Hagar, but actually loves her just as much as everyone else. God saw Hagar and God sees everyone as well. God's love for us, not just for Hagar or Abraham or Sarah or Isaac or Ishmael. That same love extends to every one of us. And so in your journey, maybe you feel invisible, maybe you feel betrayed, maybe you feel cast out. Maybe you have felt discarded. Maybe you have been feeling that you have been used and abused. God sees you, and God does not abandon you. Now, the journey to move forward, I'm sure for Hagar and Ishmael, the journey moving forward, though, probably was not easy. In fact, Ishmael, where did he want? He wanted to stay in the wilderness. And is living in the wilderness an easy life? It is a hard life. And especially back then. They had no running water, they had no truck. Life was different back then.

But I think too, I cannot just focus on this particular story without also looking at the behavior of Abraham and Sarah. Frankly, as I was reading this story, I was so troubled. Dare I say I was very angry with them as I read this story, because how could they be so callous? If you really read the story, I'm trying to be very. I would be much more stronger. But there's children here. Okay, I hope you're reading behind the lines. I could go way deeper on this, but I'm Trying to be careful because there's sensitive ears and I don't want to have to have parents have that awkward conversation. But what Abraham and Sarah did to Hagar was reprehensible. I don't care if it was back then or if it is now. In fact, if anything, it makes my anger boil. How do we treat others who are on the outside and the outcasts? Do we love them the same or do we try to take what we can? And I don't care if you're a Christian or not, because God had called Abraham, right? And I think that as followers of Jesus, I want to challenge us. How do we view those around us? For those who are less fortunate, do we treat them the same and do we love them the same? Do we respect them the same? Do we honor them the same or do we love them the same? How I treat another who is more vulnerable reveals my actual beliefs than my statements

of belief. How they treat one another more vulnerable means my action than my beliefs more than my statements of belief. How we treat more treat another more vulnerable reveals our beliefs. Are statements of belief. How you treat another more vulnerable reveals your actual beliefs more than your statements of belief. We can say all that we want, but if you do not show and practice love and respect, I think Jesus wants us to do more. And that's hard because sometimes when those who do not understand us or we don't understand them, it's easy to pigeonhole them.

So this is my challenge. It's a hard challenge. My friends, actually, before, let's reflect. **Where have you lacked faith and put limits on God's ability to care for and to guide you?** Where have you lacked faith and put limits on God's ability to care for and guide you?

And as we move forward, the challenge here is I want you to **pray daily and trust that the Lord will supply your needs, just as God did for Hagar and Ishmael. And to love the outsiders.** May we be a people who loves those, cares for those who perhaps maybe not be in the in crowd. And even if you are on the in crowd, do we always treat each other with love and respect? Not always. I want you to love those inside and I'm going to modify this on the inside as well. God calls us to love one another because in fact, if anything, that is what you will know them. They will know you by their love. If their love, if my love is in them, you will know who they are. And that's not easy.

So I hate to be a downer. God loves you and if God has loved you, share that with others. Don't keep it to yourself. Don't keep it to yourself. If you want to make a difference in the world, love one another. People will not know or trust you if they don't feel liked by you. And people know you will know if you're cared for by one another, by how they look, how they act, their body language. Do you trust somebody who says they love you, but their face is one of contempt or questioning? No. Let us love truly one another with kindness and fairness and respect. God can do anything. God listened to Hagar and cared for her. And God can love and care for you as well.

Let us pray. Father in heaven, thank you for the opportunity to gather together today as we close out. Lord, your names, Lord, this series. We hope and pray that there's many things that we've taken. But above all, Lord, may we never forget of your great love for us and your call to go out and to love one another. Help us to be faithful. Grant us, Lord, the patience and the wisdom when that sometimes can be challenging. But may we, may we be reflections of you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Grace and peace, everyone. Amen.