**Genesis 17:15-21, 21:1-7 December 9, 2020**

**Advent Midweek Series II: A Child is Born: Isaac**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Adam and Eve….didn’t have to wait very long. We don’t get the impression they did in Genesis. If anything the next event that we hear about in their lives after getting kicked out of the Garden of Eden is the birth of Cain. It’s the very next verse of Chapter 4 in Genesis, “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain.” We could almost assume that it happened immediately once they tried having a child. This is the example of a family who has an easy road of “having” a child. This says nothing to the future of that child, but that’s what we talked about last week. This week we look at a different family, and a different experience. What about when things aren’t so easy. When it’s difficult to conceive a child. Today we may say, oh well, big deal, and move on with our lives, adopting a child or perhaps going the route of a surrogate. Not so in the days of Abraham and Sarah. A child was a big deal, a male heir was essential to passing on your family name, and in Abraham’s case the covenant promise of a Savior. Abraham having a boy was very important. Well, I have good news. A child is born! And his name is Isaac.

The long awaited and sought-after child! Isaac, the son of Abraham! What a blessing! And yet….Isaac is a forgotten Patriarch of sorts; Abraham and Jacob get far more chapter and verse space in Genesis than does Isaac. We literally follow Abraham for decades as he wanders aimlessly around following God based on nothing more than faith. As for Jacob, his story is interesting mostly because of his relationship with his 12 sons; and it is that relationship that gets everyone to Egypt and sets the stage for the rest of the Old Testament.

As for Isaac however, well, there is not much to his story. He is born, there is quite a bit on how Abraham sends his servant to go find Isaac a wife from their native people and not the pagans, Isaac does find a wife and marries Rebekah, and then Isaac shows favoritism for his son Esau over Jacob, he famously is deceived and gives Jacob the blessing and then he is gone. Not much else to add to the story.

But in that short life, he does one thing that is far more important than anything else he could have possibly accomplished had he lived for centuries. So important is this one action, that we still remember his name as one of the patriarchs of Israel today. His greatest accomplishment is that….he is born. That’s all he had to do to be remembered for all time; he was born.

Now that sounds silly, compared to the significance of his father, Abraham, but remember that Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah was not only 90 years old, but she was also barren. She and Abraham had tried to have children; many times; and yet, they had none.

There is quite literally, a disaster beyond all disasters brewing here. If Abraham died at any point without a son, his property would be given to a servant and his name would be erased from memory for all time.

And so despite the assurances of God that they will have a son, Abraham and Sarah look for other options: Abraham has a contingency plan that Eliezer will inherit the household; and later Abraham and Sarah both sin in attempting to speak for God with their plan to have Abraham have a child with Hagar, Sarah’s servant, which results in Hagar conceiving Ishmael who is supposed to be the answer; but God says no; Abraham and Sarah will have a son who will be the rightful heir.

For our own perspective there is a lot at stake here: without Isaac, the rest of the Old Testament does not happen. Everything in Genesis is about getting to Egypt; everything that follows Genesis is about life after Egypt. Without Isaac, the Plan of Salvation is in jeopardy as there is no one to father Jacob, and no way to get everyone to Egypt.

But Abraham does not have such a long term view of things; not having a son is a very practical matter as Abraham and Sarah are worried about the here and now, not 2000 years down the road. They knew that the days of living beyond 120 years were over; they knew that their time on earth grew short; they knew that Abraham had accumulated a great many riches in gold and livestock; and while they knew these were all earthly things, they also knew that they wanted someone in the family to take over when they were gone; not a second class servant.

But God is not worried about the age of Abraham and Sarah; nor is He worried about continuing the plan of salvation; nor is He even worried about what Abraham and Sarah are trying to do to help move things along.

God has promised a son to these unlikely parents, and they will have a son; a miraculous son, a son born happy and healthy to two parents in their old age. A miraculous birth to unlikely and unprepared parents just as two other unlikely parents will have a son some 2000 years later in Bethlehem.

And so when the cry finally goes up, that a child has been born to Abraham and Sarah, there is much rejoicing, not to mention much relief. Everything can continue now, as the promise of a son, and heir, a continuation in the family line has now been fulfilled to Abraham.

And for Abraham and Sarah, that is more than enough; Abraham can not only rest assured that his household and earthly possessions will be in the hands of his own flesh and blood; but he can also comfort himself once more that God keeps His promises to His people; and now that the promise of a son has been fulfilled, he can be assured that so too will the other promises that have been made also be fulfilled.

Isaac leads a pretty forgettable life; but he has two important jobs: to be born and to father Jacob; and both are accomplished in relative obscurity.

Isaac takes the position of a lot of other people in the genealogy of Jesus: that of a placeholder. The story attached to his name is not full of history like that of Abraham; nor is it full of scandal like that of David. Isaac is simply the son of Abraham, and the father of Jacob.

Isaac seems hardly worth a mention, but he is given a place of honor. He is evidence that God keeps His promises; that God can do the seeming impossible in giving a son to parents who are beyond the years of bearing children. And if God will fulfill His promise that He made to Abraham and Sarah of giving them a son; then so too will God fulfill His promise that He will send a Savior.

And God does indeed send a Savior; born to the just as unlikely parents of the virgin Mary and the humble carpenter Joseph. And this child will be much more than a placeholder in the family tree; rather He will be the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; Jesus will be the descendant that all the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were patiently waiting for.

But Jesus comes much differently than Isaac did. Abraham wanted an heir who would take care of his stuff when he was gone, and Isaac did just that. But Jesus comes not as the heir who receives what has been left to Him by His forefathers; rather He will be the one who makes all people heirs of eternal life.

Jesus, the miraculous child, born of the house and lineage of a King, born in a stable to a humble carpenter, lives a life far from obscurity and irrelevance, but instead changes the world forever. Changes our lives and transforms us into God’s children by being the very bridge between us and the Almighty God. Jesus, the Savior, the promised one, the Messiah, the long awaited gift of Christmas.

So you can rejoice, that the child who is born in the Bethlehem manger, has not come to be an heir, but to make you an heir of eternal life.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.