

This summer my kids and I listened to the story *The Princess Bride*. If you've only seen the movie, you're missing out on great detail. There are 3 different parts of the book. There is the story part which you see in the movie & in the book. Here is the story of adventure and sword fighting and who could forget, true love. In the book there are 2 other parts – the narrator which happens in *italics*. Finally, there are (\_\_\_\_), parenthesis where you learn detail that is necessary to understand the story, but where you learn so much. This is kind of how our scripture reading today functions. There is the main story which could have been condensed into Abraham sends the servant to find a wife; he meets her at the well and brings her home with her families blessing and they live happily ever after. But if we don't read the whole story we miss the depth of what is found in the scripture.

This story is a story of faithfulness. This story is a story of courage. This story is a story of love. Now, more than ever, we need examples of faithfulness, courage and love. We begin by looking at Abraham and the relationship he has with his servant. We know from studying the book of Genesis, that Abraham made a covenant with God that included everyone in his household, servants and all. We do not know if this particular servant was there from the beginning but we can see from his actions that he is a man of faith. He is a man of faith to Abraham and to God.

We see him thinking through and planning, what might go wrong. We see him working towards preparing for the task at hand.

We see faithfulness in Rebekah for not just meeting the need immediately set before her, giving the servant a drink of water, but by going above by caring for all 10 of the camels. She is indeed generous. We see she is faithful in caring for all in her path.

We see the faithfulness of God – even though God never speaks in this passage – that God’s plan of grace & peace is ever present. Everyone recognizes that God is at work. The servant sees it, Rebekah’s parents see it and ultimately, Abraham & Isaac recognize it.

The servant allowed God to work through him by taking time to prepare, pray and wait. We could do a whole sermon series on this passage, just looking at how we prepare to be faithful, how to pray for faithfulness and waiting for opportunities to be faithful. If we’re honest none of like to do all three. Some of like to prepare, some of like to pray, but almost none of us like to wait. Not only is the servant faithful he is excited about what God did through him and has to tell the full story, twice – once to Rebekah’s family and once to Isaac. He wants to tell them the mighty works of God in his life.

I wonder what happens when we apply this to our lives now? How do we prepare? We know how to prepare for a hurricane (even if we don't like it). We don't know how to prepare for a pandemic. It seems if things change, moment by moment, sometimes the preparation is thinking through worst case scenarios. Sometimes the preparing is knowing that we can't have a plan and being flexible. Sometimes it is just knowing what direction we need to start.

What happens when we pray? We have spent years together talking about prayer. We know that it is not doing it one specific way or putting in the right combination to get what we want. In fact we've learned that prayer is more of a relationship with God, which is certainly born out in our story today. What happens when we listen as much as we speak. I know that is an interesting question given that my profession is to speak, but as much as I speak I have to listen. I have to listen to God, to each of you and together we listen for where God is calling us next.

The hardest of the three is to wait. This where we find ourselves now. We plan and wait and wait and wait. We have no idea how long the servant was gone. We do not know how long the journey was there and back. The only idea of time we have is knowing that the servant spent 1 night with the family. But they were faithful in waiting.

There are a lot of pastors and preachers and people of faith who talk about God's plan. It is important for us to be careful with that language. Here God promised Abraham, people, the father of nations. God promised land and yet Abraham waits. We've seen times when God has been faithful. God didn't promise to find a wife for Isaac. Instead, Abraham knew the kind of person that was needed for Isaac. God doesn't always work in specifics. God works on our character. That is what God calls us to do. God's plan for our life is not planned out minute by minute detail. God's plan for our life is a life of grace and peace, blessing and love and faith. What happens if we shift our language away from God has a plan for you to saying God is with us. God will go before us. It changes the conversation. God is a partner with us instead of a puppet master in heaven.

We are in uncharted territory and none of us have all the right answers. But if we dig into who God calls us to be. If we prepare, pray and wait, God will be with us as we make decisions. We can look back in the 40 years of Faith United Methodist Church. We can see those times that God was at work with us in the preparing & planning and planting of this church. We've seen it as step out in faith in response to hurricanes. We see this in who we are. The question before us is how will we be faithful? Can we follow after the example of the servant? May we prepare,

pray and wait. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.