

“Peace. . . in the End”  
 Sermon for 8 December 2019  
 Texts: Genesis 26:31 & 1 Cor. 10:6-14

**By the tender mercy of our God  
 With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us  
 To give light to those who sit in darkness  
 To guide of our feet in the way of peace.**

Luke 1:79

**And his name shall be Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father<sup>1</sup>, Prince of Peace<sup>2</sup>(Isaiah 9:6)**

Isaac is presented this morning as an example of a godly peacemaker. Let's see what we can learned from God's word. To the first requirements of walking in peace: The first necessity of peace: ***be listening to God***; the second necessity of peace: ***be where you are supposed to be, be doing what you ought to be doing***. The third necessity of peace: ***Sojourn in this land***—don't be too settled, or set in our ways because this world is not our final home. A fourth necessity: ***walk in the way of the Lord—with meekness and all humility— looking out for the best interests of others (Be the blessing!)*** Now, as for listening to God, so as to walk in His ways. Read, study and inwardly digest the guidance His spokespersons have already recorded, expressed.

**And they departed from him in peace, v.31.** Our text is the happy conclusion of a not so convivial chapter. It begins cheerfully enough despite the announcement of **a famine in the land** which reminded everyone of the previous famine **in the days of Abraham** (v.1). If it sounds like history is repeating itself, rest assured there is some of that. However, Before Isaac could pull up his pegs and drive his livestock back down to Egypt, **the Lord appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell you.”** (v.2) This warning suggests that Isaac had gone as far as Gerar, but once there he is warned against returning into the dominion of Pharaoh. Rather **sojourn (here) in this land and I will be with you and will bless you for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father.** (v. 3) Sweet, as they say. And then the Lord reiterates the terms of that covenant: **I will multiply your offspring as the stars of the heaven and I will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed because 1. Abraham obeyed my voice, and 2. kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws.** (v.5) Now this text gives us a rather expansive version of Abraham's

---

<sup>1</sup> Because the kingdom of Christ is eternal, and because he is the second Adam—Jesus is father to a whole new race existing forever—in this sense, and not in competition with God the Father, Jesus is declared to be **Eternal Father** in Isaiah 9. At the very least Jesus would be seen as a sharer in the eternity which Jehovah possesses! Jesus, in a sense, fathers a “new economy” of divinity by appearing as the resurrected and glorified Son of God.

<sup>2</sup> Job 29 Illustrates what the **prince of peace** was like **when I (Job) was in my prime . . . when the Almighty was yet with me** (v.4), **When I went out to the gate of the city** (v. 7). **When the ear heard** (my justice, judgments), **it called me blessed and when the eye saw, it approved because I delivered the poor . . . and the fatherless . . . those about to perish . . . and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy** (vv.11-13). **I put on righteousness, and it clothed me, my justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy.** (v. 16) Job enacted the loving and protecting government that God purposes godly government to be. This is no some dream, some utopian aspiration!

breadth of knowledge. **My charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws** refers to a body of divine instruction we are not necessarily introduced, *explicitly* in the narrative.

For those interested in where God is, *about his self-disclosure in Scripture*, we note that chapter 26 has two divine appearances: a longer speech and a one liner<sup>3</sup>. In speech one, God issues a directive, warning Isaac to **dwell in the land of which I shall tell you**. (v. 2) This is crucial counsel because the temptation was to return to Egypt—and that would be no more acceptable to God than taking Isaac back to Mesopotamia was to Abraham in the bride quest of the previous chapter. Isaac is to locate, or situate himself at the express direction of God and a divinely ordered series of relocations will eventually bring him to a peaceable location. Then, the second necessity of peace: be where you are supposed to be<sup>4</sup>. **Sojourn in this land** a reference to each location in order: so don't settle anywhere at this time. *Do not fear transiency. I am moving you about*, purposively and over time, in stages, through the *instrumentally of hostile neighbors and adverse circumstances*. So don't get too fond of any temporary location on this journey. And don't resent your neighbors—they have no idea of how I Am (God) using them to bless you in the end!

God discloses himself here as a God who warns his loved ones, and as one who knows something vital about real estate, a critical piece of information (he knows where you can dwell and thrive at peace with God and man—move there as directed). *This is care, guidance and provision*. And to this God adds: **I will be with you and bless you**.

There follow, in this speech, four promises. The first is about the eventual gift of **these lands to Isaac's descendants** (which is probably not something to bring up while neighbors are feuding over water rights, boundaries and legitimate ownership with you<sup>5</sup>) and the second is about **establishing the oath that I swore to Abraham** (v.3). God is a God of His word and His dependability is vital to the trust walk of happy obedience. I trust that Isaac knew about that **oath** and God reiterating that he will **establish** it communicated to Isaac that his life, the destiny of the land were both secure in God's purposes and plans. So, to the **steadfast love** of God to Abraham, and more pressingly to Isaac—in the securing of the right woman to be his bride are reinforced with covenant consistency. God's oaths, unlike those of men, do not alter over time—or shift as the generations unfold. God is reliable, do not fear (either life, or neighbors), trust him supremely and *listen to what he is saying to you*.<sup>6</sup>

The third and fourth promises are more distant/future(?) than the first two and yet they are implicated in the **oath to Abraham** just mentioned. The third is about populous offspring (**as the stars of heaven**, v.4) whereas the fourth is **in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed**. This last suggests that God's speech bears a strong

<sup>3</sup>The first speech (vv.2-5, over 100 words in our NASB) as contrasted with v.24 (a mere 28 words, less than a third of the first utterance). God speaks directly to mankind over 3,800 times in the OT!

<sup>4</sup> **Sojourn in this land** could provide a future meaning (i.e. your final destination), the Promised Land in due season, or be to the people of God, a reminder that our eternal home is in heaven with God. I believe all three levels (present, future and eternity) are relevant as possible references.

<sup>5</sup> One should use discretion about whom we tell our dreams. Sometimes the content is "for me to know and for you to find out!" Over-sharing brought Joseph a whole caravan of troubles and griefs.

<sup>6</sup> This is not an idle point. There are plenty of other voices to listen to beginning with listening to yourself. Your interests, lusts, desires all voice themselves all the time. That inner voice may not be your true conscience.

ironic streak; in the storm and strife of Isaac's immediate experience (the disputes, quarrels of water) a most immediate blessing is found: various people groups are getting the water they need to survive from the persistent and fruitful well-digging of Isaac and family. So although Isaac was not feeling blessed, he was being a blessing—I strongly suspect that that happens a lot. I mean in spite of their hostility, God has Isaac doing good anyway, all along the way from Gerar to Beersheba!

The first speech closes out with God's declaration of "because." I, God, am blessing you **because Abraham obeyed my voice**<sup>7</sup> (v. 3) And this implies that Abraham knew and taught the Law long before the giving of the Law on Sinai, under the leadership of Moses, *nearly half a millennium later!* That defining moment is perhaps better considered a refreshment, or review of the Law—not its introduction, or a first time occurrence. This means that Abraham's family<sup>8</sup> was introduced to the Law well before the nation of Israel had been formed. Israel was formed through the Egyptian captivity and her subsequent deliverance from slavery (the Exodus). The Law was a part of the family legacy from the patriarchs on down to Moses' day. God inspired Moses to write out the Law on the mountain, and to engrave it on stone (twice!) **but the content was not new, rather it was known in house.** As a civic and moral code the Ten Commandments are unsurpassed!

I should remind us of God's word on these particular matters: **The way of the Lord** consists of **My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.** This is from Genesis 18:17-19:

**17 The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18 since Abraham will surely become a great and [populous] mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? 19 For I have [known him] or chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep "the way of the Lord" by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."**

**Keeping the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice** is demonstrably more *general* and less *specific* than **keeping my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws!** It is best to take the latter as a breakdown of the former; they point to the same body of knowledge, or religious content. One loves God by keeping His commandments and by keeping His commandments lives righteously and justly. Love sums up the Law equally as does **doing righteousness and justice.**

Back to Genesis 26, Rebecca, being a new bride has all of this to master, as she gets up to speed as Isaac's wife, in the family of God. She masters the legacy of Law which she then inculcates in her twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Isaac and Rebekah are recently married when Isaac moves back to Gerar<sup>9</sup> and Rebekah, being **exceedingly attractive** arouses the same insecurities (and fears) that Sarah, her mother-in-law, had done in the previous generation. So this bit of history sadly does repeat itself. *Of course this says a lot about the quality of men in that part of the world, at that time.* So Isaac lies about his wife: **She's my**

<sup>7</sup> In that it is always for **Abraham's sake**, Isaac was 1. kept humble (it was nothing he was, or had done!) and 2. kept grateful—his legacy was precious.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham's family precedes Isaac's family even though Isaac was party to both.

<sup>9</sup> This is where Abraham and Sarah dwelt when Isaac was born, for years prior (circa 2028 B.C.)

**sister.** And there is, thankfully, nothing about Abimelech placing her in his harem or even seeking to marry her. However, if Rebekah is Isaac's sister, she is fair game so to speak. The king observes Isaac laughing and acting intimately affectionate with Rebekah and concludes that there is something wrong with this picture. He doesn't assume that incest is in progress; he assumes that they are acting married! **Behold, she is your wife!** Isaac defends his self-protective lie with **Lest I die because of her** (v.9) And the king, horrified about what might have happened under the fiction of Rebekah being Isaac's wife, deals with the real jeopardy wisely: **Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.** (v.11). Problem solved, right? This little hint of "sexy" doesn't rise to scandalous at all—besides they are married! And it is worth noting, the long delay of the son of promise does not seem to appear in the saga of Isaac and Rebekah. So, everything goes smoothly, or swimmingly from here on out, right?

Well, in this world, not exactly. **Isaac sowed in that land<sup>10</sup> and reaped in the same year a hundredfold**(v.12). That's an interesting little factoid: Isaac the pastoralist, had taken up agriculture, farming a plot near *Tel Haror* (this is the agreed upon site for the second most ancient city in Western world—it covered 40 acres, had walls and farming took place outside those walls). He does well in a time of famine when food prices are up. The latter requires vast tracks of land (think of ranchers in the American West where a hundred acres might be enough to feed a dozen head of cattle in a good year). Farmers didn't cultivate vast acreage until the age of mechanization! *Isaac grew rich off farming*; something our farmers would really love to accomplish. **He gained more and more and became very wealthy. He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants; so that the Philistines envied him.** (v.14)

Envy then as envy now spells trouble. That trouble took the form of well-filling: **Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father.** (v.15) That's hostility fueled by envy. And, what is worse, the growth of Isaac's household put Abraham's immense household in the shade—several thousand grew to many thousands, prompting Abimelech to rescind his hospitality: **Go away from us for you are much more populous (mightier) than we.** (v.16) Then as now, land use, development and population growth causes pressure and friction.

Isaac could have stood on his rights, raised up an army and started a war—he could have taken the aggressive, or ferocious approach to the situation (the provocations of well's being filled, quarreling amongst people groups) instead, he moved away from the royal city: **So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar** (into remoter, more rural and less developed land—where he reverted to herding livestock) **and settled there. This is the second place that God directed Isaac to sojourn. And Isaac dug again the wells of water** which the Philistines had stopped **after the death of Abraham. And he gave them names that his father had given them.** (v.18)

---

<sup>10</sup>Why is that tucked in here? Because God is signaling that Isaac the pastoralist has become more of an agriculturalist, a more settled way of life than that of chasing pasturage seasonally! This is not merely a stage of development (in the theoretical history of human evolution); it is an indication of economic flexibility—Isaac was able to pick farming up and then put it back down! He was adaptable. An agriculturalist depends on the weather, too, but not with the same vulnerability as does a pastoralist. This should not seem strange to us, living in an age of multiple careers for one lifetime.

But the equivalent of range wars broke out, with the herdsmen of Gerar saying **The water is ours! So he called the name of their new well, Esek** (meaning “contention”) **Then they dug another well and they quarreled over that one, too; so they called its name Sitnah** (meaning “enmity”) **And they moved on from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he called its name Rehoboth** (meaning “room, or broad places”), **saying, “For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.”** (v. 22). Each well that Isaac re-dug and then abandoned (due to contention and strife/quarreling) ranks as a peace-making effort—Isaac patiently responded to Philistine hostility by industriously digging wells! They cursed, he blessed. *It takes work to live at peace—time and labor.* Isaac kept at it. And each time he relinquished his claim to a well, **he blessed someone else**<sup>11</sup>. (**Through you, all nations will be blessed**—even the greedy, hostile and envious ones.) It takes meekness to make peace; meekness united with trust—trust in the promises of God: **I will be with you and will bless you. . .** (v. 24)

I wonder if it felt like that with the first well? How about the second well? It wasn't until the third well, that the contention ceased. Now it appears that Isaac moved even further, returning to Beersheba. **And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, “I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham’s sake.”**

**So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord and pitched his tent there. And there his servants dug a well.** Obviously God foresaw the upcoming visit of Abimelech and Ahuzzah and Philcol, *the high command of the Philistines*. Isaac fears that this is a hostile visit. **Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?** However, I believe that Isaac is not feeling insecure particularly, quite the opposite. This is strong, direct and forthright language and it has its place in securing peace. Isaac dug wells, left them; dug new wells and left them as well. He was relentless and hardworking for peace. ***And the leadership of the Philistines, seeing how he has acted—and not chosen to be aggressive—and they are impressed: We see plainly that the Lord has been with you*** (just as God promised!) **So, we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you** (remember Abimelech's protective order for Isaac and Rebekah?) **and have done to you nothing but good** (They lied.) **and have sent you away in peace. “You are now the blessed of the Lord.”** (vv.28-29) **So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths and they departed from him in peace.** (v.31) That happy outcome of friendly hospitality signaled the Lord's blessing on Isaac (**I will be with you.**).

Our traditional “Peace” reading of John 14:23-29 incorporates this same blessing in **Peace I leave with you . . . My peace I give to you. Compare that with Gen. 26:24: Fear not I am with you . . . I will bless you.** Matthew 1:23 records that Jesus will be Immanuel meaning **God with us!**: **A virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Immanuel.** In the lovely carol, “Come. Thou Long Expected Jesus,” we sing,

---

<sup>11</sup> It is amazing that our opposition can run out of annoying before we run out of yielding—that as Isaac re-dug wells, he out dug their hostility! We can wear them out with kindness.

“Come thou long expected Jesus, Born to set thy people free; From our fears and sins release us, Let us find our rest (peace?) in Thee.” That is the essence of **I am with you . . . I will bless you.** 9v.24)

That same day Isaac’s servants came and told him about the well that they had dug and said to him, “We have found water.” He called it Shibah (meaning “Oath”). This puts the second speech of God (v. 24) in context. God, knowing that Isaac was about to have some apparent enemies show up as unexpected guests says, **I am the God of Abraham your father, fear not for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham’s sake.** A pre-emptive strike of God prior to the entourage of Philistines’ arrival! A confirmation, an encouragement that God knew he would need to stay peaceful . . . to walk in peace.

Now our second read appears very pertinent to this last point, 1 Cor, 10:11-14. —which I find helpful because it is more down to earth where I live as Isaac once lived practically speaking:

**6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.” 8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them acted immorally, *and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.* 9 Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. 10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.**

**11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.**

Immorality is contemporary idolatry, make no mistake about it. It’s still practiced. Let us repent of idolatry and not commit it anymore. To the first requirements of walking in peace: The first necessity of peace: ***be listening to God;*** the second necessity of peace: ***be where you are supposed to be.*** The third necessity of peace: ***Sojourn in this land—*** don’t be too settled, or set in our ways because this world is not our home. A fourth necessity: ***walk in the way of the Lord—with meekness and all humility, looking out for the best interests of others (Be the blessing!)*** Now, as for listening to God, so as to walk in His ways, read, study and inwardly digest the guidance His spokespersons have already recorded, expressed in His word.

Isaac, the peacemaker, is our example; see what we have learned from God through him!

**Amen.**