

EL ROI: THE GOD WHO SEES ME

Genesis 16; text: Genesis 16:13

August 22, 2021

I. The "Me" Whom God Sees

A. Our Desire to think well of our ourselves and to have others think well of us

B. Hagar's rising status

1. Hagar was an Egyptian slave girl.
2. She was a tool of Sarai wanted to use her to produce a son, so Sarai could give Abraham an heir.
3. But the baby Hagar bore was her own.
4. In that time the one thing that gave a woman purpose and meaning was that she bore children who would inherit the family's possessions and carry-on the family name.
5. And so for the first time Hagar saw her status in the family rising.

Genesis 16:4 (NIV) [Abram] slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.

6. For the first time in her life she was a somebody, and in one way or another she let Sarai know it!

C. Hagar's fall

1. Her being a somebody didn't last long.
2. Sarai complained to Abram.
3. He sided with her.

Genesis 16:6 (NIV) "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

D. Our identification with Hagar

Questions:

- 1) Do I find that others often try to impress me with what they or their children have accomplished? Can I admit to doing this to others?
- 2) When have I experienced failure or when have my hopes been dashed? How did I deal with that?
- 3) Have I ever felt that I a failure as a Christian? Have I ever felt I was succeeding in my struggle against sin our doubt, only to find that I gave in to temptation once again?
- 4) How successful are we as a church and why would I say that? What standard for success am I using?

II. The God Who Sees

A. The identity of the angel of the Lord as El-Roi: The God Who Sees Me

1. He was no ordinary angel.
2. He was none other than a manifestation of God himself.
3. In our text Hagar names him El-Roi: The God who sees me.

B. The Nature of His Seeing

1. This was no ordinary seeing, like we see a hummingbird at our feeder.
2. The God who saw her and the God who sees us is one who knows his people through and through.

Psalms 139:1-3 (NIV) O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

3. El-Roi seeing Hagar also signified that he chose her.
 - a. She was not some accidental character in Abraham's story.
 - b. This nobody, this young slave girl, who would never be more than that in eyes of people, was special in eyes of God.
 - c. He chose her to be the mother of a great nation.
 - d. In fact, he gave her the same promise that he gave to Abraham.

Genesis 16:10 (NIV) The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."

C. The Expression of his Compassion for Hagar

1. In verses 11-12 the Lord spoke about the son he was giving to her.
2. In verse 12 he describes the man Ishmael would be
3. But, for this morning let's especially focus on verse 11, his name.

Genesis 16:11 (NIV) The angel of the LORD also said to her: "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery.

4. Hagar's son would be a living reminder of that day when El-Roi heard her misery, and promised that he always would hear and be there for her.

D. One Important Reminder of His Seeing Us and of His Compassion for Us

1. As we ate of the bread and drank of the cup God reminded us of all the times when we've run away from him and were in the wilderness of our sin, and when he found us.
2. He also gave us a Son of promise, his own Son Jesus.
3. As we ate and drank taking that Son inside us by faith, we realized his promise that he will always see and hear us, and will never forsake us.

Questions:

- 1) Some Bible teachers and commentators understand the Angel of the Lord as an early manifestation of the Word (John 1), the second Person of the Trinity. What do I think of that idea? How does God manifest himself to us today? How has he shown me that he sees me?

- 2) What is my reaction to the truth that El-Roi, the God who sees me, knows me through and through? Do I find that scary or comforting? (Read Psalm 139 and reflect on its implications.)
- 3) What specific testimony can I give of God showing his compassion to me when I was struggling or suffering?
- 4) How does El-Roi show his compassion to us when we partake of the Lord's Supper?

III. God's Call to Trust Him until Faith Becomes Sight

A. His call to Hagar to trust him until her faith became sight

1. Before he gave her any promises the angel of the Lord called Hagar to faith,
2. He sent her right back to the same intolerable place she was running away from.

Genesis 16:9 (NIV) Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her."

3. Like the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11, she would have to wait for him to fulfill the promises he gave her.

Hebrews 11:13 (NIV) All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.

4. For Hagar things would get worse before they got better.
 - a. In chapter 21 she again found herself in the wilderness.
 - b. That time she wasn't there because she fled there, but because jealous Sarah wanted her and Ishmael gone.
 - c. Despite her faith and obedience, it looked as if God, who in next chapter demanded Abraham offer his son Isaac, would take her son of promise from her.
 - d. Ishmael lay under a rock dying of thirst.
 - e. But God heard Ishmael's cry
 - f. And El-Roi who saw her opened her eyes.

Genesis 21:19-20 (NIV) Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer.

5. El-Roi is still fulfilling his promise to Hagar, saving her sons and daughters.

B. His Call to Us to Trust Him until Our Faith Becomes Sight

1. Sometimes when God rescues us from the wilderness, things get better.
 - a. All of us who came to faith in Jesus Christ can testify to the wonderful changes that God has wrought in our lives.
 - b. Let us be reminded of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NIV) Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

2. Yet, as we look forward to the Promised Land, we still struggle in the wilderness.
 - a. Some still struggle with alcohol.
 - b. Some are having difficulties with spouses and family relationships.
 - c. Some struggle with health and with making healthy decisions.
 - d. Some struggle with loneliness and poverty. All of us struggle with sin.
3. No matter how blessed or miserable we feel let us trust and hope that the God who sees is making our faith sight
 - a. Despite what we see in our society and in some cases in our own families, thousands here are also coming to him for the first time or are recommitting their life to him.
 - b. And despite what is happening in our lives he also sees and hears us.
 - c. Keep praying, and keep believing the truth he revealed to Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12
 - d. Some day each of us will say with Hagar, "You are the God who sees me," "I have now seen the One who sees me."

1 Corinthians 13:12 (NIV) Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

Questions:

- 1) Where else in scripture do we find examples of God expecting people to demonstrate faith by sending them into places where they experience injustice and suffering? Where else in scripture do we find example of people's suffering becoming even worse as they persist in trusting God?
- 2) If God sees me and has compassion on me, why does he let me suffer? Some folks say that if I trust God enough he will take away my suffering; others say that in my suffering I hear God's call to keep trusting him? Who is correct and why? (Read Hebrews 11 before answering this question.)
- 3) What testimony can I give that El-Roi saved me from sin and suffering already? In what areas of my life am I still struggling with sin and suffering? How has suffering become worse because I trust in God?
- 4) Where can I see El-Roi at work in our world, fulfilling his promises? Where is hard to see that?
- 5) On that day when I see El-Roi, the God who sees me and his promises are fulfilled will I still need to trust him? Why do I say that?