

**Minnesota Valley Church**

**Date: Sunday, February 25, 2024**

**Church Year Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent**

THEME:

Prelude: Carol Gustafson

Singers: Fugleberg

CALL TO WORSHIP: *Psalm 22:25-28*

*PASTOR: From Israel comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;*

*ALL: Before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows.*

*PASTOR: The poor will eat and be satisfied;*

*ALL: They who seek the LORD will praise him--*

*PASTOR: All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD,*

*ALL: And all the families of the nations will bow down before him,*

*PASTOR: For dominion belongs to the LORD*

*ALL: And he rules over the nations.*

Hymn #308 "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations"

**Lenten Confession of Sin: *Lamb of God Most Holy! Who on the cross didst suffer, Patient still and lowly, Thyself to scorn didst offer; Our sins by Thee were taken, Or hope had us forsaken: Have mercy on us, O Jesus!***

Children's Sermon:

Reader: Joel Carrizales

EPISTLE LESSON: *Rom 5:1-11 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of*

*the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Mark 8:27-38 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" 28 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." 30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. 31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." 34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 If anyone is*

*ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."*

**READER: Here ends the reading of God's Word.**

**CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!**

**CONFESSION OF FAITH:** Apostles' Creed- *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen*

Gloria Patri: Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

Announcements and Prayer Concerns

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: Chosen by Carol

**SERMON: ISAAC & ISHMAEL: THE LAND AND THE BLESSING,** Genesis 17 Pastor Tom Olson *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

DEBATE: One of the big debates going on around the world is whether or not the Jews or the Palestinians have a right to be in the land we call Israel. It is a fruitless debate because the Jews are not going to give up their tiny country any more than we are going to

give America back to the Natives or the British are going to give England back to the Celtic people.

BIBLE: For people who believe the Bible, it is important to see what it says about the Jews and the Arabs. Both the Muslims and the Jews claim Abraham as their forefather. And they are right. But what did God say to Abraham about his future offspring that would descend from Ishmael and Isaac. Let's look at Genesis 17 in terms of who belongs in the land and who God wants to bless. The answer may surprise you. Isaac & Ishmael: The Land and the Blessing.

## **I. ABRAHAM: THE FATHER OF MANY NATIONS**

***Genesis 17:1-8 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. 2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." 3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.***

MILLIONS: God chose an old man and an old woman, far beyond child-bearing age, to become the parents of millions of people who now inhabit the middle east and beyond. Of course, some are also from other patriarchs such as Lot, Abraham's nephew and from the sons and daughters of Noah's sons, Ham and Shem. But for the most part, the Jews and Muslims claim to be descendants of Abraham. And through intermarriage with others, that is probably true.

CANAAN: Lands once occupied by the wicked Canaanites, are now occupied by those who call themselves the children of Abraham. This extends from Northern Africa all the way up to

Russia. According to one historian, even the Brahmins in India claim to be descendants of Abraham. Israel is mostly Jewish and the offspring of Isaac and Jacob. The rest of the thousands of miles of land are mostly Muslim, Arabian, and from Ishmael. It is an absolute miracle. God fulfilled his promise to Abraham by making Isaac the father of one tiny nation of the Jews and Ishmael the father of the giant territory with many kings.

UNBELIEF: The sad fact is that very few of the Jews or Ishmaelites have come to believe in Jesus as their Savior and Messiah. That is why they can't live in the peace, love and security of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ., the Prince of Peace. In past centuries, a good number became Christians, but they have mostly killed. The war in Iraq wiped out the ancient Christians population of Mosul.

WARPED: Moses describes both Jews and Arabs well in *Deuteronomy 32:5*, ***“They have acted corruptly toward the LORD; to their shame they are no longer his children but a warped and crooked generation.”***

GRAFTED: In Romans 11, God compares the unbelieving Jews to branches that have been cut off from God's vine so that Gentiles can be grafted in. But in Romans 11:23 Paul makes this statement, ***“If they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.”*** *Romans 11:25* goes on to say, ***“Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in.”*** I believe that may be soon!

SAND: We can conclude that all believers, have been grafted into the family of Abraham. So that is why God can tell Abraham that his offspring are as numerous as ***“the sand of the sea.”*** All of us who have faith in Christ are spiritual children of Abraham and the spiritual promise of righteousness by faith that God credited to him. In Genesis, Romans, Galatians and James it says the same thing about justification by faith: ***“Abraham believed God and it***

***was credited to him as righteousness.”*** ABRAHAM IS THE FATHER OF MANY NATIONS.

## II. ISAAC: THE FATHER OF ONE SMALL NATION

***Genesis 17:7&8, 18-20 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an EVERLASTING possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God." 18 And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!" 19 Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.***

COVENANT: God's special agreement is not with any of the offspring of Abraham except for Isaac, born of Sarah. He is the miracle child. His birth marks Israel as a miracle nation, chosen by God for special purposes. ***Genesis 12:2 ...all nations on earth shall be blessed through you.*** This is not because Israel is better than any other nation. In fact, Israel has been such a difficult and sinful nation that God has had to destroy it and rebuild it at least twice. Modern day Israel is said to be the most atheist nation on earth. But it still is a nation that God is using in his plan of the ages.

JESUS: God's son, the Savior of the world was born in Bethlehem and crucified in Jerusalem where He also rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives and he will return to earth on that same Mt. of Olives. ***Acts 1:9-12 ...Jesus was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from***

*you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives...*

Zechariah gives us more details about that last day before Christ returns to Jerusalem from heaven: ***Zechariah 14:2-5 I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. 3 Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. 4 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. 5 You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.***

God has promised this tiny land of Canaan to Israel in the past and in the present and future. Jerusalem is the city of the great king. Even for all eternity, there will be a new Jerusalem that is incredibly beautiful and multi layered, a 1,500-mile cube as described in the book of Revelation, that is over 3 billion cubic miles, that would mean that if there was 3 billion people in the new Jerusalem, each person would have a space of more than 640 acres if each layer was a mile high! And that is just one city in the new heavens and the new earth!

ISAAC IS THE FATHER OF ONE SMALL NATION that God planned to be a blessing to the whole earth for all eternity.

### **III. ISHMAEL: THE FATHER OF A GREAT MULTITUDE**

***Genesis 17:20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will GREATLY increase***

***his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a GREAT (large) nation.***

FULFILLED: This has also come to pass. Not only is Israel a tiny, but powerful, nation in the land of Canaan. But Ishmael has become a great, or large group of nations that extend from Morocco to India! It is amazing that the Ishmaelites possess a large part of the Africa and Asia, but they cannot stand the Jews having a tiny, relatively worthless, piece of ground. Israel is only the size of Rhode Island or even a couple of larger counties in Minnesota.

DIFFICULT: God warned us that the offspring of Ishmael would be difficult. ***Genesis 16:12 Ishmael will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility...*** That is true of many of his offspring as well with terrorism coming from them toward others as we have seen once again in the attack on Israel. It was terrorism of the most horrible kind in terms of rape and mutilation of young women that would cause you to be sick if you read the description.

MILLENNIUM: But it is not supposed to be this way. The children of Israel and the children of Ishmael are supposed to live in peace as they come under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. But this will only happen when Jesus comes again and rules the nations with a rod of iron. ***Revelation 12:5 "...He will rule all nations with an iron scepter." Isaiah 2:3-4 The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.***

That means there will be peace because those who are unruly will be kept under control...just like a peaceful classroom where a good

teacher is in control or a peaceful home where good parents are in control or a peaceful community where good leaders are in control.

But for now, there is no peace. That is the end result of sin, idolatry and unbelief. That same darkness in the middle east is growing strong in our land. Good leaders would help but ultimately the solution is for revival...for people to come to know Jesus in a life-changing way. The song says it well *“Christ for the world we sing, the world to Christ we bring, with fervent prayer. The wayward and the lost, By restless passion tossed, Redeemed at countless cost, From dark despair.”*

This chapter from Genesis 17 reminds us that God is bringing the world to an expected conclusion. Our assignment, until that great day, is given to us in Mark 16:15 “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” Let’s begin by praying for our friends, co-workers and neighbors to come to know the Lord. Amen *Now may the peace of God that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

Hymn #323 “Macedonia”

Lord’s Prayer

Benediction

Closing Song: Chosen by Carol

Postlude: Carol Gustafson