

Genesis 16:13

The God Who Sees Me

1. When things are horrible-(Hagar)
2. When I need strength to submit

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Summer series  
OT Names  
Lord of Life

Pentecost 7 readings of Ezekiel 2:1-5, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 and Mark 6:1-6 all lend well to the idea that God's grace and strength are enough to help us face "weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, difficulties... For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor.12:10)

The stories of people like Colonel Sanders are inspiring. Did you know, at the age of 75, he lost his business in 1967 when a road was rerouted? He went to over 1,000 restaurants trying to sell his 11 herbs and spices recipe, but was told "No" each and every time. Seven years later, he sold his business for 15 million dollars, and that's mid-1970s dollars. He just wouldn't turn away from rejection.

Then there is Henry Ford who went bankrupt five times before he established a successful Ford Motor Company. Or perhaps you know that Walt Disney was fired from a newspaper early in his career. The editor said he wasn't creative enough?!? Disney went bankrupt seven times before his studio took off.

It's neat to hear about people like that, people who inspire us to keep fighting, to keep facing, to keep finding strength... because who of us hasn't been tempted to just give up. Moms perform the ultimate task of love by caring for their children, but what mom hasn't thought to herself, "Not another diaper." Who of us has jumped out of bed every morning thinking, "We get to go to work or school again! Yeah!" Who of us hasn't been tempted to throw in the towel when it comes to the finances or the relationships or the everyday life God calls us to live. And then there is the life God calls us to live before those who do nothing but belittle our beliefs, ridicule our behavior and bully us into silence or fleeing.

And the kind of inspiration we need doesn't come from Colonel Sanders. We need more... because we have hearts that are weak and sinful and lead us into temptation. We need someone to strengthen us and empower us in here (heart). We NEED the God Who Sees Me, the God a woman of the Old Testament named Hagar needed: "She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me, "for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." (Genesis 16:13) He is the God Who Sees Me

1. When things are horrible – (Hagar)
2. When I need strength to submit

## 1. When things are horrible-Hagar

It's helpful to know the background of our lesson today. Chapter 16 of Genesis takes place after God called Abraham to be the father of a great nation. God promised that his family would number the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore. God promised that anyone who blessed Abraham would be blessed and anyone who cursed him, God would defend Abraham and curse them. More importantly, God promised Abraham that through him all nations would be blessed. In other words, the Savior for all nations and people would come through his family.

What an awesome promise – except there was just one small problem: Abraham didn't have a family yet. He was 75 years old (the same age as Colonel Sanders by the way) and his wife was 65 and they had no children. How could his family become this great nation through whom the Savior would come?

That's where this chapter comes into play. Sarah, 10 years later, thinks she has the answer.

Read Genesis 16:1-6. Strange stuff, huh?

Clearly, Sarah and Abraham have no regard for marriage. They introduce another woman into their relationship which mocks God's blessing of marriage between 1 man and 1 woman. This sounds so strange to us, so sinful – and it was. But I should point out, it was a part of that culture and custom. Archaeology has turned up marriage licenses from that time which permitted a husband to have a child with a servant if his wife

wasn't allowed to provide an heir for her husband. I mean, someone had to carry on the family name and the family business. Understand though, just because culture proclaims its own rules for marriage, it doesn't make it right. Sarah and Abraham were making a mockery of God's gift to them. Understand too, though it was wrong, sinful even, God still can choose to use it for his purpose – and he does here, Hagar, the maid servant becomes pregnant.

But also understand that the worst sin, is Sarah's lack of trust in God's power and promise. "It's been 10 years," she could have thought. "I'm not getting any younger." "We need to do something about this." And when one doesn't trust God and leave it in his hands and his timing, when one takes matters into their own hands, you can count on problems.

And so in this horrible-Hagar situation, because of Abraham's and Sarah's lack of faith, because of her own arrogance and pride, because all failed to look to God, Hagar has to flee – which is what her very name means. Hagar the horrible is on her way home to Egypt.

Here's what happens next: Read Genesis 7-16.

What an awesome name for God! The God Who Sees Me! Who even sees horrible Hagar and her frailty and fleeing and still loves her.

And sees how horrible we are. Over the past few years you have seen me and seen my weaknesses, but God sees even more of them. No one knows me better than my wife except for God who sees all my weaknesses and sin. I try to hide my frailties from my children who see them day in and day out, but God sees them even more clearly – yet, yet, HE STILL LOVES ME! It would be one thing if you and I could trick God into thinking we are better than we are, but He is the God Who Sees Me. We can't – and still HE LOVES YOU! Just as he loved Hagar.

Why? Because this Angel of the LORD, the second person of God, who spoke to Hagar in the desert is the one who would later live and walk among us where he could be seen. And he would face rejection and ridicule – even in his hometown according to the Gospel lesson today – but he would not give up or flee. He carried his cross in life and then he carried it for us in death. His perfect life and his innocent death would provide us with the righteousness we need before God. Think of it – the God Who Sees Me – sees us clothed and covered in Christ. He sees us perfect and pure and holy and sinless – without frailties or weaknesses.

The God Who Sees Me! The Apostle Peter assures us, "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to our prayers." (1 Peter 3)

## 2. When I need strength to submit

And did you catch where God called Hagar to go? "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." He not only sees her when she's horrible but he sees her when she needs strength to submit to her mistress, to go back and face the challenges and difficulties she is asked to face. God even gave her a promise to strengthen her to do so. Her son Ishmael would also become the father of a large nation. His path would be different, wild and filled with hostility but God would bless this father of the Arab nations.

If that's enough to give Hagar the strength to submit, then the promise of our future should make us even stronger, because we are part of the God's church, people from every tribe and language who will spend eternity in heaven. We are sons of Abraham, children of the promise, of a future and hope.

A young boy was allowed to attend a mission in the city of Burma. There he learned more and more about Jesus and the result, he wanted less and less to do with his parents religion. His dad began to worry so he thought he would take him to his temple and show him the beautiful gardens and let him smell the fragrance of the incense. He pointed to the beautiful gold and silver images of their gods and thought for sure it would impress his son. "Here is a god you can see," he told his son, "not like the Christian God you cannot see." The boy answered his father, "You are right. These gods I can see, but they cannot see us. And it's true, I may not be able to see my God with my eyes, but I know He can see me." (source: Daily Bread Devotions)

He knew the God Hagar knew. You know the God Hagar knew. The God Who Sees Us washed in the blood of the lamb. The God Who Sees Us when we need strength to submit and stand up to rejection and the ridicule and live our faith. AMEN.

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