

**Devotions – May 3-9, 2015**  
**JoAnne Barrix**  
**Trinity Lutheran Church, Rhinelander, WI**

**Sunday, May 3, 2015**

Praying with the Women of the Bible

Sarah – Strong Woman of Faith

Text: Genesis 21: 1-2

**Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.**

The name Sarah means chieftainess or queen. God changed her name as a sign of his purpose for her. She was to be a source of nations and kings...the line that would eventually lead to Jesus Christ. Sarah is unique. She is the first historical woman of the Hebrews and their first mother. She is one of the most important female figures as the natural source of the Jewish people.

When we read about the story of Sarah and Abraham, we discover that even this strong woman of faith had her doubts and faults. She did not trust that God would provide her with the child that he had promised. She did not see the value of patience to see God work in His own time. She did not treat Hagar as a sister in faith. Yes, this strong woman of faith had many faults, as do we. However, God proves to us that especially when we are full of doubt, the impossible is possible. Perhaps our biggest problems won't seem as impossible if we let God handle them in His own way and in His own time.

We Pray: *Heavenly Father, we know that we cannot walk this earth without obstacles and worries. We thank you that you can forgive us our faults and work your will through us, even when it seems impossible. Amen*



**Monday, May 4, 2015**

Hagar – God is Faithful in His Promises

Text: Genesis 21:13

**I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.**

The name Hagar is an Egyptian name and closely resembles the root of the Arabic *flight*. This eventually became the circumstance of her life as she did flee and become a fugitive or immigrant. Hagar is the only person in the Bible to name God and the only woman in the Hebrew Scriptures to see and talk with God.

Hagar bore Ishmael to Abraham when he was 86 years old. When he was in his 100<sup>th</sup> year, Sarah bore him Isaac. For over 14 years Hagar and her son lived in Abraham's home with all the tension as Sarah looked upon the son of her husband with another woman. Finally, Sarah compelled Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away into the desert with a small supply of bread and water. When supplies run out, Hagar leaves her son and tries to escape hearing his cries.

God is patient and faithful in his promises. Sometimes flight or escape is the easiest and most tempting solution to our problems. In fact, it can become a habit. Hagar tried to escape Sarah's cruelty. In the desert, Hagar walked away so she wouldn't have to watch her son die. Hagar had forgotten God's promise that from her son would come a great nation. Our big problems won't seem so impossible if we let God handle them. The way to bring peace to a troubled heart is to focus on God's promises. Trust Him to do what he says.

*We pray: Heavenly Father, You sent your Son to die on the cross so that all can be saved. Sometimes it seems like you have forgotten those that are brokenhearted and hurting. Help us to remember that you do keep your promises and you will meet our needs as we are despairing and alone. Amen.*



**Tuesday, May 5, 2015**

Rebekah – Favoritism Brings Sorrow

Text: Genesis 27: 13

**His mother said to him, “My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say: go and get them for me.”**

The name Rebekah means “a tie rope for animals.” It suggests snared or bound or captivating. Rebekah started out as a beauty with a childlike simplicity to her. She was industrious and not afraid to dirty her hands with hard work. When Eliezer came to find a wife for Isaac, she believed that it was God's will. She was modest, frank, open, and had great kindness and energy. Her faith and graciousness matched her physical beauty. However, when she became a mother, she revealed how masterful, clever and deceitful she could be as opposed to Isaac who seemed more simple and trusting than she.

Rebekah favored Jacob over the first born Esau. She convinced Jacob to follow a plan that would trick Isaac into giving his birthright and blessing to Jacob instead of Esau. Some say that Rebekah was only taking action based on the prediction that the “elder shall serve the younger,” but God does not need trickery and deceit to fulfill his promises. Rebekah ends her days a brokenhearted woman.

The sorrow of Rebekah can help us to remember that nothing succeeds which does not follow the way of truth and honesty. The curse did fall on her. We should always be cautious in our motives for what we do.

*We Pray: Heavenly Father, we ask your promise that you will remind us to keep our actions true and right, that you will give us strength while we wait and that you will grant peace in our families. As with Rebekah, use even our mistakes to carry out your plan. Amen.*



**Wednesday, May 6, 2015**

Rachel – Romance and Tragedy were Mixed

Text: Genesis 29: 31

**When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.**

The name meaning of Rachel is “ewe”. She is the first person in the Bible whose name is derived from a name for an animal. Rachel’s father, Laban, was accustomed to nursing the weak ewes and gave this name to his daughter.

As we read the story of Jacob, Rachel and Leah we see again that God’s plan is carried out even though they each have many faults. Jacob has deceived his father to receive his blessing. Then Jacob is deceived by Laban when he thinks that he is marrying Rachel, but instead marries Leah. After seven years of work, when Jacob marries Rachel, she does not have children and she and her sister become rivals. Sadly, Rachel believes that the only way to earn Jacob’s love is to give him children, when he has deeply loved her from the time that they met.

Rachel is finally blessed with a son of her own. She names him Joseph and of all of Jacob’s children he becomes the godliest and the greatest. Now she feels that Jacob can finally love her. God’s plan is fulfilled.

We can make the same mistakes that Rachel made. We can feel that we have to earn God’s love through some work of our own. But we find that God already loves us so much that he sacrificed His only Son so that we can live our lives knowing that we are deeply loved.

*We Pray: Heavenly Father, please help us to be patient in achieving our hearts desires. Help us to be right in our relationship with you. And help us to accept your love and the love of others. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*



**Thursday, May 7, 2015**

## Miriam – Jealousy Brings Judgment

Text: Numbers 12: 1-2

**Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. “Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?” they asked. “Hasn’t he also spoken through us?” And the Lord heard this.**

The name Miriam is from the root word of Mary and it means “bitterness” as in trouble, sorrow, disobedience and rebellion. Miriam is the sister of Aaron and Moses and she and her mother are responsible for seeing that Moses is raised by Pharaoh’s daughter.

Miriam was a prophetess and received revelations from God. She also was known for her musical skills. Prophecy and musical skills were often closely related in the Bible. Along with Moses and Aaron, Miriam is a leader in the wilderness and a colleague of her brothers. Her words and work were the inspiration of God and her songs tell of all that God has done for his people as they walk in the wilderness.

After many years of being a protector and partner of Moses, however, Miriam tries to break down his authority and threatens the unity of the nation. She becomes jealous of the power that Moses has and questions his judgment in choosing a wife. She voices her concern over this small issue, but her real goal is to be equal to Moses. God swiftly punishes her.

How often do we overlook what gifts we have and become jealous of someone else’s gifts? God gives us each opportunities to serve in our own way, with our own talents. God calls each of us to action.

*We Pray: Heavenly Father, bring us joy in raising our voices to you in song. Show us opportunities to serve you and guide us to be daring in the work that you have called us to do. Forgive us and heal us. Amen.*



**Friday, May 8, 2015**

Hannah – The Ideal Mother

Text: 1 Samuel 1: 10-11

**In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. And she made a vow, saying, “O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life,”**

The meaning of the name Hannah in Hebrew is gracious, graciousness or favor. Hannah lived in the last period of the Judges and her son Samuel was the last judge, followed by Saul who was a King of Israel.

Hannah was one of two wives of Elkanah and she was childless. While Hannah had a house, she did not feel that she had a home or a family. The more that Elkanah tried to comfort her, the more that Peninnah, Elkanah's second wife, taunted and ridiculed her. But Hannah did not respond in kind, she prayed. She wept and prayed. She vows that if God will give her a son, she will offer him back to the Lord in service. And once she gave her problems to God, she was content and believed. She believed God before she even saw the result.

When Samuel was three years old, she brought him to the tabernacle to learn from Eli and to serve God. She gave up what she had wanted most. Her heart rejoiced. In her eyes, there was no greater honor than to serve the Lord. Samuel was a "first fruits" offering. He was the first of her children offered to God with no guarantee that she would have others. He was the best that she had to offer, her only son that she had prayed and longed for.

Hannah shows us what gifts we should give to God. Do your gifts cost you little, or are they gifts of sacrifice? Do you present God with small tokens, or do you give Him your entire life?

*We Pray: Heavenly Father, we ask you for peace in our households. We call you to be near us when we are feeling alone and abandoned. We ask that you will bless us as we practice first fruits giving. Amen.*



**Saturday, May 9, 2015**

Mary – Mother of Jesus

Text: John 19:25

**Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.**

No female has been honored as much as Mary. The name Mary occurs in the New Testament 51 times. The root form means "bitterness" as in trouble and sorrow. Mary is poor yet comes to be placed highest among women. There is no mention of her physical beauty, but only of her beauty of character. She is highly favored by the Lord.

As the chosen mother of Jesus, Mary endures much hardship in her life. There is first the "shame" of being pregnant before her marriage to Joseph. Then there is the long trek to Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus in a stable. Right after the birth, the family flees to Egypt to avoid Herod. Mary remains faithful and trusting of God through all of these hardships.

Mary could not surround Jesus with wealth and with the exile in Egypt she couldn't even offer Him much education. But she did give Jesus a home filled with trust, love and understanding. Also, Mary had a sense of the presence of God. To Mary, God was not a being far off and uninterested in her life, but because of her Son, Mary always knew that she was in the divine presence of God. She instilled obedience in her Son and put the Old Testament scriptures in his hands.

Mary's deepest sorrow occurs as she stands beneath the cross and watches the humiliation and death of her Son whom she intensely loved. We can study the life of Mary and see that her life mirrors our own in that we have our own hopes and dreams and sorrows. Although Mary's life was that of an ordinary person, without the wealth and power we would think of for the mother of a King, her character is revealed in her response to the unexpected. The last place that we see Mary is with the believers in the upper room. Her Son is alive forever.

*We Pray: Heavenly Father, we ask that you help us to be like Mary. Open our eyes to see that even though we are ordinary people we can do great things with your help. Be with us as we face challenges and hardships knowing that with your promise and the resurrection of your Son, we too will live forever. Amen*

