

## Devotion for the week leading to the 21st of June 2020

*This service is written for Stretton Park and McDonald Wing in Maffra, Laurina Lodge in Heyfield and Royal Freemason's in Sale, but with the intention of being available for any who are interested for their private use.*

### INTRODUCTION

This week we continue with the story of Abraham and his wife Sarah in the Book of Genesis. This story is about complicated blended families, but no matter how complicated family life becomes, God is still with us.

HYMN No. 6 - Jesu, lover of my soul.

*You can read the words to yourself, or out loud. If you remember the tune well enough you can sing it yourself. You can, of course sing just the first, or the first and last verses.*

BIBLE READING - From Psalm 86:1-10 - Hear me, O Lord, and answer me. Have mercy on me, O Lord. You are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you. You alone are God.

### PRAYER

We thank you O Lord, for your great love for us, spoken of in the Old Testament and shown through the life of Jesus, our Christ. With the psalm writer of old, we ask for your forgiveness to make us righteous, once again, before you. Help us to leave behind those things that are harmful to others and to ourselves, and help us to follow the way of Jesus as we live our lives. This we pray in Jesus name, Amen

### OLD TESTAMENT READING - Genesis 21 : 8 - 21

After Abraham's wife Sarah had her son Isaac, she became jealous and afraid. Sarah was afraid that that Isaac's legitimate right of inheritance may have been threatened because Hagar's son, Ishmael, was Abraham's first-born, even though he was illegitimate. Sarah demanded that Abraham get rid of Hagar and Ishmael, and he reluctantly did so. God sent an angel to care for Hagar and Ishmael in the desert.

HYMN No. 25 - I come to the garden alone

### REFLECTION

I think that only Shakespeare could have come up with a more complicated story than the love-life of Abraham and Sarah. It is the story of the husband passing his wife off as his sister (she was actually his half-sister) and the wife giving her slave-girl to her husband as his mistress. Not surprisingly, it all went sour. It was while Sarah thought she could not have children that she asked Hagar, her servant girl to be Abraham's mistress. It was very important in that society for a clan leader such as Abraham to have heirs, and it was a selfless and honourable act on Sarah's part to ensure Abraham had descendants. But it is the story of Hagar that is really sad.

Hagar was originally Egyptian, a servant or slave-girl, somewhat like a personal maid, indentured to Sarah. When Sarah thought she could not have children, she arranged for Hagar to sleep with Abraham. We are not told if Hagar liked Abraham or not, but she did as she was told. When she fell pregnant, Sarah became jealous and spiteful and treated her so badly that Hagar ran away, despite the risk of punishment. An angel met Hagar and told her she would have a son who would be "like a wild

donkey of a man”, a man of hostility and disagreements. The angel also told Hagar to return to Abraham’s household and subject herself to Sarah’s mistreatment, which she did. Then comes today’s story of Sarah demanding that Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael away. Even after Hagar was sent away, God sent an angel to comfort her and lead her to water in the desert. At every point in Hagar’s life someone else was telling her what she had to do. She did not seem to have much choice over her own life. She seems to have been poorly treated by everyone who should have cared for her, but God still cared for her. When the chips were down, when she was alone and afraid, when she was rejected by the people who were her family, God sent angels to care for her.

God does not reject people like Hagar because they don’t have a neat, legitimate family structure, so neither should we. The story of Hagar shows us that no matter how complicated things and people and families get, God still cares for each and every person involved.

HYMN No. 26 - I need thee every hour

#### PRAYER

God our Father, today we pray for our families. Things seem to be different these days, there does not seem to be the stability and the rules that there used to be. We worry about our own grandchildren, or those we know of, growing up in families that don’t have the same structure that we experienced. Help them Lord in their worries and concerns. We pray for those who are involved in family break-ups, that there may be respect, understanding and compromise. We also pray for those family members that we are separated from at this time. We pray for those who are ill and we also bring to you the concerns our own hearts. Be with us and be with those we care for, we pray,

#### THE LORD’S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, For ever and ever, AMEN

HYMN No 29 - Amazing grace

#### The BLESSING

May God the creator, who created us to love, enable us to be aware of His love for us.

And may the blessing of the almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

be upon you and remain with you always, Amen