

SIGNS THAT THE LORD IS WITH YOU

Genesis 24:50-51

TEXT: *Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the LORD; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has directed."*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

How specific should we be in bringing our prayers to the Lord? Before us is an amazing account of a man whose prayer was so specific that when the Lord answered it everyone was convinced of the success of his mission.

His mission was to find a wife for Abraham's son, Isaac. Abraham had him pledge a solemn oath that he would not bring back a heathen woman. So important was the spiritual welfare of Isaac's future wife and children. She **MUST** be a "Christian" since the Lord had declared, ***"through Isaac all peoples on earth would be blessed."*** That meant that the Savior of the world was to descend into this world through Isaac.

This faithful servant set out and came to a certain location where he and his entourage planned to settle for the night. Then he prayed: ***O LORD, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'--let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."*** Ge 24 Scripture says that before he had finished praying, along comes Rebecca, a beautiful virgin. And when he asked her for water, she responded exactly as he had asked the Lord to have the chosen girl respond as a sign.

What are we to make of this? Are these just things that happened to people long ago in the Bible? Where they real? Are they real? Dare we think for a moment that the Lord would regard our prayers in such a way? Paul wrote to the Corinthians: ***Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*** 1 Co 1 Shouldn't these words of Paul be a warning to 21st century Christians to be more rational in our religious thought and not look for signs from God and such specific answers to our prayers?

I can assure you this morning that even though this Scripture is about a prayer prayed more than 4 thousand years ago, nothing has changed for the people of God. Signs that the Lord is with you have already been given to you, and with the certainty that they are signs from God.

What was the purpose of this mission? It was more than just finding a wife for Isaac. It was to find that woman through whom the Lord had already planned to send the Savior into this world. There would have been other godly women in the world at that time who would have made a suitable wife for Isaac, I'm sure. But there was only one whom the Lord had set apart as the ancestress of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and before this poor servant of Abraham could finish his prayer, the Lord ended the search.

Here we are, 4000 years later, still gathering for worship of the Savior Jesus who was born of another virgin named Mary, a descendant of Rebecca and Isaac. We gather

together to worship Jesus who is that Descendant of whom prophets and kings had written. We gather together to worship Jesus, of whom Isaiah wrote: *...he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Is 53 We gather to worship Jesus, of whom King David wrote: *...you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.* Ps 22 We gather together to worship Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of all mankind, and according to Scripture, THIS IS TO BE A SIGN TO YOU THAT THE LORD IS WITH YOU!

As surely as the Lord had called Abraham, Isaac, and lovely Rebecca to be his wife, Paul told the Ephesians: *In (Christ) we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.* Ep 1 Do you hear what this says? It says that you have been predestined for a future with God. The sign He gives you is the same one Paul says was given these Ephesians: *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.* Ep 1 When Abraham's servant told the account of his prayer and how the Lord had sent Rebecca out to fetch water, even Rebecca's father and brother declared: *This is from the LORD; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has directed.* We also should be as confident of our Lord's gracious working in our lives for He has given us signs of His grace that we should value highly. Not only our knowledge of Jesus and the forgiveness of our sins, but Holy Baptism that washes away our sins, and the Blessed Communion through which He still comes to us with His body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins! These signs are not man-made, but God ordained and instituted for our assurance and hope.

Therefore, let us know and believe that the Lord is with us! But you say, "Pastor, I've prayed like this before, and there was no answer, no sign from God. Where have I gone wrong? And if the Lord is with me, why does He often seem so far from helping me?"

. A girl gives a stranger a drink from the village well, and she is suddenly given away to marry a stranger. Her father and brother were convinced: *Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the LORD; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has directed."* Ladies, what if your father and brother would have done this to you, convinced that this man and this event were from the Lord?

You can't. Unless the Lord comes to us with a direct word like He did to the Christmas Shepherds: *and this will be a sign unto you... you will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger...* Or, like when Gabriel said to Zechariah: *you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.* Lu 1 ...and Zechariah was indeed unable to speak until John the Baptist was born. Except for these very rare

occasions in history, you can't know what is a sign from God or something that you're just hoping for, or something that might even be from the devil. So how can you know?

Even Abraham and Sarah had only God's Word concerning the birth of Isaac. There were no signs. They had to wait 25 years for the promised son to be born. Then Isaac was born, and then one day, years later, the Lord told Abraham to take him to Mt Moriah to sacrifice him. There were no signs. Nothing made any sense. But Scripture tells us that there was only one thing that enabled Abraham to go through with the sacrifice: ***By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.*** He 11 And now Abraham had sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac. His servant prayed, and beautiful Rebecca walks into his life.

In the same way, because we have the same God and Lord, I can be bold in my prayers to the Lord, knowing that He will always hear and answer them. He will never double-cross those for whom He shed his blood. He is God whose wisdom and love go together so that if and when my prayers are silly or dangerous for me, He smiles like a father and I know how to give you what you need and even what you want. It may take 25 years like Abraham and Sarah were required to wait for Isaac.

But He is faithful. So we should be like Abraham's servant who was not afraid to pray, even for a sign. We might not say "sign" but rather guidance and direction, wisdom and patience, faith and trust. Let us pray for our families and friends, our congregation and school, our country and community, and as we pray, our Lord in heaven will show us the signs about which He has already told us: His love for us in Christ. Amen.