

God Hears in Affliction

by Emmanuel Esh

This sermon delves into the importance of intercession and reaching out to the Muslim world, drawing parallels from the story of Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac in the Bible. It emphasizes the need for the church to pray for and bless the descendants of Ishmael, recognizing their significance in God's plan of salvation and unity. The message calls for a spirit of intercession to provoke jealousy in Israel and bring about unity in Christ among all nations.

Scripture: Genesis 16:7, Genesis 21:8, Romans 11:11, Isaiah 60:7, Daniel 9:3

Topics: "Intercession", "Unity in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Well, good evening to everyone. It's good to be together about what I believe is very close to God's heart, and that is that this gospel would be preached to the ends of the earth. That, I believe, is the heart of God.

I believe that God has a passion for souls. And I believe that if we draw near to Him, He will give us some of that passion for souls as well. And so that's part of my goal here tonight, is to just maybe explore a little bit what I see, at least one part of what I see God's heart in scriptures here.

So for quite a number of years, I have been working with Daniel there in Africa, and for many years was leading out in the missions board there. And one of our major burdens and goals was for the Muslim people. And it just seemed like such a hard job to lead a Muslim to Christ.

And I got to meet many Muslims, but I never got to lead one to Christ. It just didn't happen. And I thought it was really, really a hard job.

But it has taken me on a journey to study Islam in some sense. And so I'd like to go to the Bible tonight and walk through what I see as some of the roots of Islam in the Bible. And I'd like for us to be able to look at that and say, I can become a partaker of what God wants to do.

Does anyone here know about how many Muslims in the world today? 1.6 billion? Did you say billion? I just looked it up. It's like 1.9 it says, but depends where you get it probably. But that's the Muslim population.

Let's just start with Abram and the promise that God gave Abram that he would have a son, and that through that son, every family in the world would be blessed. And time went on and no son was born and they're getting older. And Sayyidah, if I can pronounce it that way, suggests that he should take Hajar, their maid, the Egyptian maid, to wife and bear a son.

And then she would claim the son. So Abram takes her advice and he goes in to Hajar and she conceives. And when she conceived, she despised Sayyidah.

And Sayyidah, what do you think was happening in her heart? Here's this servant girl, she gave her to her husband. Abram's somewhat, I mean maybe he's in love with her, I don't know. What's happening in Sayyidah's heart? I should have never done it.

What else? Jealousy. Jealousy. What is jealousy? Jealousy is when I want something that you have.

In a sense, jealousy. You have something, I'm so jealous of you, that you have it and I don't. And Sayyidah is jealous.

She complains to Abram and Abram says, do with her what you want. And so she deals hardly with her and Hajar flees. And she's found by the well, in the wilderness, by the way to shore, by an angel of the Lord.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Hajar, where are you from? Where are you going? And she says, I'm fleeing from the face of my mistress, Sedeh. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, return unto your mistress and submit yourself under her hand. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, listen, you are with child and you will bear a son and I will bless him that you cannot count his seed for the multitude of them.

You shall call his name Ishmael because the Lord, which means the Lord has heard your affliction. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, he shall be a wild man. His hand will be against every man and every man's hand will be against him and he will live in the midst of his brothers.

And Sedeh said, she called the name of the Lord that spoke to her, the God who sees me. For she said, here, I looked after him who sees me. What do you think it would feel like to have met with God? And her response was, the God who sees me.

What might she have been feeling? Did you ever come to a place where you felt like God was seeing you? That's what her response, the God who sees me. I believe she felt like God could see right through her. I would tend to think that she knew that God saw everything about her.

The God who sees me. And then she says, here, I looked after him who sees me. And I can see that that angel of the Lord leaving, walking away from her, and she's there just looking after the Lord who sees me.

Do you think her life was transformed? Who would meet with God in such a way? And their life not be changed, right? Do you think Abram had told her about God? Do you think Abram would have shared with her about his God? And now she gets to meet this God. And the promises that he gave. You're going to bear a son.

Call his name Ishmael because God hears your affliction. And for 13 years, Abram receives that son. And for 13 years, it's Abram's only son.

All these years of Abram waiting for a son, and now he has a son. How do you think he would treat that boy? How many fathers? Let me see your hands. Raise your hand if you're a father in this room.

How would you treat your son, your only son, which you've waited for dozens and dozens of years? How would you walk with that son? And what would you teach him? What would you teach him? What's the one thing you would teach him? About God. I can imagine Abram and Ishmael. He's growing up.

He's a small boy. They're walking together. Abba, what is God like? And Abram would try to explain what God is like.

Abram would try to tell Ishmael that God is a good God, and that he's like a father. God is like a father. You know how that I am a father to you? I take care of you.

I love you. I provide everything you need. I'm a good father to you, Ishmael, right? Oh, yes, Abba.

God is like that. God is like a good father. And Ishmael would have questions.

And he would, but how can I know what God is really like? And Abram might have said, just the same way that I'm a father to you, that's how God is. Watch my life, and watch how I treat you, and watch how I treat people around me, and you will know what God is like by the way that I show you. And then God visits Abram when Ishmael is 13.

And he gives Abram a new name, calls him Abraham. Renames Sadae and calls her Sarah. And he tells Abraham that Sarah's going to have a son.

And Abram laughs. And Abram says, and I don't know what all he was thinking. You know what he said? Oh, that Ishmael may live.

God, I want Ishmael to live. And God says, Sarah will have a son. You'll call his name Isaac.

I will establish my covenant with Isaac. But I have also blessed Ishmael. He shall have 12 sons.

They shall be princes. And I'll bless him exceedingly because he's of your seed, Abraham. Isaac is born.

I don't know if the jealousy, I think the jealousy is still there all this time. They have a weaning party for Isaac. I'm guessing he would have been about three years old.

They don't wean at one year. They would wean more at two or three years. Ishmael is about 17 years old.

And Sarah is at that party. And Isaac is acting like a baby. They're weaning him.

He's fussing. And Ishmael mocks him. And Sarah hears him mocking Isaac.

And she gets angry. And she explodes, if I'm gonna say it that way, to Abraham and says, cast out that woman and her son. Her son shall not be heir with my son.

Now Abram would have been telling Ishmael, you're my only son. You're my firstborn son. Everything that I own is yours.

All the camels, all the servants, all the tents, all the gold, all the silver, everything I have, Ishmael, will belong to you. All of my inheritance will be yours. Until Isaac came along.

And now Sarah says, he shall not be heir with my son. And this thing grieved Abraham. Can you imagine as a father what that would be like? And that night he's grieving.

He has a problem, a big problem. And the Lord comes to him and says, listen to what your wife has said. And send away Hajar and Ishmael.

Divorce them and send them away. Because I will establish my covenant with Isaac. And Abram gets up early in the morning.

He puts a bottle of water in her hand and a little bit of bread. And he sends Hajar and Ishmael away. He divorces her.

What do you think? So Hajar comes to Ishmael. Maybe while it's still dark, she says, Ishmael, we've got to leave. We gotta go.

What, mama, what's going on? And she says, Abraham has done that thing which I never thought he would. He has divorced me. He's sending me away.

And you are my son and we are rejected. We're being sent away. We can no longer be here.

And as they get up and leave, Ishmael is trying to understand what's happening. He's been taken from being the firstborn son that rightfully gets all the inheritance and is the leader of the tribe. He's been taken from that place to just a slave in a moment's time.

He's rejected. The inheritance is stripped away. He will own no land from Abraham.

He will own nothing from Abraham. All of his inheritance is stripped away. And they got a bottle of water and a piece of bread.

And they leave and they walk out into the wilderness. And the water is finished. There's no more water.

And the bread is finished. And it's hot. They're in the desert.

And Ishmael, I can imagine Ishmael saying things like this. I thought that God was a good God. I thought that God was like Abba.

And she would have said, you can't call him Abba anymore. He's Abraham to you. He's not your Abba anymore.

And Ishmael could have said, if that's the way God is, then God could not be a father. And God, if God is not a father, God cannot have a son. Do you see Islam in that? Islam says God is not a father.

And God does not have a son. I don't know if this is what happened. But this is what I imagine.

Because somewhere, the strength of Islam says there is, God does not have a father. And Ishmael could have turned from following Yahweh, the God of Abraham. And he could have said, I'm going to follow the God of your people, Mama.

And she lays him down underneath that bush. And he's dying. And I can just about hear that cry coming up from him.

And it's a cry of fatherlessness. The most lonely cry I know of. It's the cry of fatherlessness.

And that cry goes up five times a day from these loudspeakers all over Muslim countries. And I believe it's the cry of fatherlessness. And the angel of the Lord heard his cry.

God heard his cry. And he spoke to the woman which had removed herself. She said, don't let me see him die.

And she removes herself. And she's crying. She's been forsaken.

She's been rejected. She's been abused and misused as a slave. And oh, she's a slave anymore.

And she's crying out in her heart. And it says God heard the cry of Ishmael. His name means God hears in affliction.

And he shows her a well of water. He opens her eyes to that well of water. She takes that bottle.

She fills it up with water. She brings it over to him. She takes him in her hand.

And she gives him that water. I will make him a great nation. The woman, Hajar, in a sense is a type of the church.

So many of the church people have done what she did. They've turned their backs on the Muslims. When you meet a Muslim in the aisle at Walmart, what's your response? You don't know how to respond.

You don't even know how to talk to him. Rather than go and give her that living water, you turn your back just like Hajar did. But God wants the woman, the church, to bring that living water to Ishmael.

Now, we were in a mission conference in Florida years ago. And something was done there that I've never forgotten. I've been longing to see it happen again.

There was one of the women. These were older, like people in their 60s. They were doing this mission conference.

They loved the Lord. Some of them were missionaries. And some of them were back from the missionaries.

And they were now retired. And they just really loved the Lord. There's one lady, she gets up and she did this spiel about.

And she says, my name is Hajar. And she began to intercede for her children. God, it was my children who saved Joseph from death.

You know, it was the Ishmaelites who took Joseph away from his brothers who wanted to kill him. They were my children who provided safety for Joseph. It was my people who raised the corn that saved your people.

My country provided a haven of rest and safety for, was it Rehoboam? My people provided a safe place for Mary and Joseph and Jesus. God, won't you have mercy on my people? And she began to make intercession, like Hajar would make intercession for her children. God, you said that all the children of Abraham would be blessed.

God, please open Ishmael's eyes. And what if we could pray with Abraham? Oh God, oh, let Ishmael live. What if the church would begin to cry out, oh God, let Ishmael live.

What if we would begin to intercede for these people? God, you promised to give us the heathen for an inheritance. God, you promised that all the sons of, all the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee. Isaiah chapter 60, verse 7. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee.

That's the son of Ishmael. The rams of Nebaioth, another son, they'll come up on my altar with acceptance. God, you said you would accept my son, Nebaioth.

You said you would use him to glorify your house. You said the sons of Kedar would glorify your name. God, have mercy on our children.

And bring them in. You said they would come in. And the door has been opened.

Isaac refused the promised one. Isaac refused the Christ. And because of that, God in his mercy opened up the door to the Gentiles, which is the sons of Ishmael.

And now the door is open for Ishmael to come in. He can become a partaker of the inheritance. He can have the firstborn right.

He can become a son instead of a slave. He can have favor instead of rejection. God, bring them in.

Delivered from the power of darkness. Adopted into the Beloved. Oh, yes, Ishmael's going to come in.

He's chosen to be holy, to be without blame, redemption through the blood, forgiveness of sins by faith. And Ishmael is going to come in. And he's going to be a partaker of the inheritance.

He's going to. What's Isaac going to say? Jeremiah chapter 2. We have this prophecy where God is saying, my people have forsaken me. They've changed their gods.

And he said, would you send some messengers over there to the islands, the Greek islands? And would you send some messengers over there to Kedar to see if they've changed their gods? Yeah, send some messengers over there to Kedar, Ishmael. See if they've changed their God. And God is saying, nations don't change their gods.

No, the answer is no, they haven't changed their God. But my people have forsaken me. They're living water, hewing themselves out fountains which can't hold water.

That's what Jeremiah 2 says. I believe that if the church would really get a hold of, but I believe we need to get a hold of intercession for Ishmael. Abraham interceded for Solomon Gomorrah and God heard him.

It's right in the middle of this story. Maybe God wants to teach us something about intercession. I believe we need to be in intercession.

Daniel interceded after 70 years and God turned Israel back to Jerusalem and when they come in. So I don't know what it means, all the flocks of Kedar, but it's what it says. Who is Kedar? These descendants of Ishmael, they stretched from Aleppo, Syria all the way down along Israel into Jordan, through Jordan, all the way down to the Red Sea, to Egypt, to the Nile River.

And to the east, it stretches all the way out to the Caspian Sea, the Persian Sea. And that whole area, Saudi Arabia, has been settled by Ishmael. Interesting from Aleppo to the south.

One of our refugee contacts now lives in Finland. Grew up in refugee camps almost all his life. Grew up in Aleppo.

His father's Palestinian, his mother's from Aleppo. I think that's how it was. Ran away and had to pay \$8,000 to get back to his country because if you run away from the war as a soldier, you get a fine of 8,000 euros.

So he paid 8,000, went back there last summer to Aleppo and he started buying bread for the hungry people there. Devastated place because of the war of 12 years, 10 years. Found favor in the eyes of the commander, one of the generals under Assad, next to Assad.

And that man said somehow, somehow Mohammed found favor. And that general, then the earthquake happened. And Mohammed was scheduled to go in the day after the earthquake.

He went in there with cash and started buying food for the poor. I just saw a picture of the day of the ice storm. They had a huge ice storm there and there's people living on the streets from, and they're living in the graveyards.

And they had ice, a coating of ice. Just yesterday, that general guaranteed a safe passage into Aleppo a month ago. And we got on a plane and went to Beirut, Lebanon because we're heading into that place.

Meanwhile, other things happened. Other countries came in. The U.S. didn't lift the sanctions.

I could go on and on. But we were not able to get into Aleppo. But we met him and gave him the cash.

And he spent that money on the poor people there in Aleppo in the mosque, feeding the women and children and the imam over the loudspeaker saying, this is from Christian brothers in U.S. and in Europe. This food is coming from the Christian people. And he's preaching that in the most prestigious mosque in Aleppo.

And the people began to say, Allah bless Isa. Allah bless Isa. And he said, Muhammad said, this is absolutely the best way to bring the gospel to Aleppo.

Oh, God. Oh, that Ishmael may live. So there's this jealousy has been there ever since conception.

And now, who's going to be jealous once Kedar comes in? What if Kedar comes in? And Isaac looks out there. And Isaac says, I can't believe what I'm hearing. Would you guys go over there to Kedar and see if they've changed their gods? And the report comes back and says, they have changed their God.

They are worshiping Isa Amasya by the, all of them. And you know what Israel is going to do? Israel, he says, God, Moses said, I will provoke you to jealousy by a people who are no nation. And somebody is going to provoke Israel to jealousy.

Go to Romans 11. And when they get provoked to jealousy, that middle wall partition is going to come down once and for all. And God is going to make us one in Christ Jesus, both the Jew and the Gentile.

And God is going to glorify His name. And God is going to get the glory. And God is going to take the mistake that Abraham made.

And He's going to use it for His glory. He's going to use it for His glory. And God is going to be glorious.

But the church, we have a part to play and we can do our part. And that is intercession. What if the spirit of intercession could fall upon us here tonight and we could begin? And if we study intercession, it was they talked to, they would say how good God is and how great God is.

And you're merciful, you're kind. And you're loving. And then they would say, and God, we have sinned.

We've not done what you want us to do. But now God, we're repenting. And we're making intercession for the people.

And God, like in Daniel, Oh God, hear. Oh God, do. And God brings an earthquake.

Okay, are we ready? Maybe we need to make some intercession. And maybe we need to see what God really is doing. And maybe we need to just step back and get an overall picture and say, this is what God wants to do.

And He's waiting on me and you. Let's stand together. God, we confess that we as your people have failed in taking the gospel, this glorious gospel message to these many nations who have never heard.

The thousands, the hundreds of people, groups who are yet without a witness of your glorious message. Father, where have we missed it for 2,000 years? God, would you forgive us? Father, would you have mercy upon us? Open the eyes of our understanding to see your heart of compassion and your love to these people, Lord. Especially, Lord, you promised to Abraham that all the families of the earth should be blessed.

And you promised to Ishmael that you would bless him. And so, Father, we're asking for that blessing of Ishmael to fall upon those sons, Lord, to fall upon those children, Father. Would your blessing fall upon them? You promised that Kedar would be gathered in, all of them, Lord.

You said that they would be saved, O God. Oh, Father, show us how to pray. Show us how to intercede, Father, that you promise these things.

Remember your word, O God, to Abraham to bless every family. But, O God, these families of Ishmael, they've not yet come in, Father. They're still crying.

And, Father, you gave him a name which says, God hears an affliction. And, Father, you can still hear that cry going up all around this world, O God. Would you do something with that cry of fatherlessness? And would you have mercy upon them, Lord? Then would you save them? Would you bring them in, Father? And, Father, we offer ourselves as instruments in your hand.

Just show us where you're working, Father, and take us to that place, whether it be Aleppo, whether it be our hometown, whether it be our neighbors. Give us a love for not just the Muslim world, but all the souls of this world. Make us to be, make us a blessing wherever we go.

Father, we give you glory and give you praise. In Jesus' name, Amen. You may be seated.

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