

He Sees You

“The great thing to remember is that though our feelings come and go, God's love for us does not.”

- C. S. Lewis

The story of Hagar starting in Genesis 16 always seemed to me somewhat pitiful. Hagar was just the maidservant, not Abram's wife, and her future son, Ishmael, was not the son of the covenant. Hagar was ridiculed by her mistress Sarai, and Ishmael would be outshined by his half-brother Isaac.

Thousands of years later, when Jesus lived on earth, a wealthy man approached Jesus of Nazareth, seeking affirmation that he would inherit eternal life. Known to believers around the world as “The Rich Young Ruler”, this man lived what appeared to be a blameless life, but an encounter with Jesus changed him.

Finally, a contemporary of The Rich Young Ruler is one of Jesus's disciples and perhaps His best friend, Simon Peter. Peter is the brash, eager, and bold disciple, following a new Rabbi who promised that Peter would now be fishing for men. Peter's life had been upended.

God has used the stories of these three people to remind me that I am seen. Too often I can be found living unto myself, sharing some moments with God but hoarding too many of them for myself alone. Happy with my time with the Lord, but too easily pleased by this life. Satisfied with my mudpies in the sand and lacking a longing for another world. However, we cannot fly ‘under God's radar’. I worship and love a God who created the world, who lives outside of time, who placed the stars and ordains governments. These three different stories in Scripture remind me that this great God is not too big or busy to intimately see and know each of us.

Hagar, the Seen One

Hagar's story has a rough beginning. She was treated harshly by her mistress Sarai and then fled (Gen 16:6). God found her in the wilderness, lonely and certainly wondering what would come next. When God asks her where she came from and where she is going, Hagar simply answers, “I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai.” Notice, no answer to the question about where she is headed. Hagar has no direction. How many of us can see ourselves in Hagar? In the midst of a difficult season with no future dreams or plans, God shows up for her. In this brief conversation, the Lord assures Hagar that He would multiply her offspring. Hagar had no future hope until God provided it for her. At that point, you can almost see her jaw drop in awe, and Hagar responds in worship. She says, “You are a God of seeing” (Gen. 16:13). This is one of my favorite designations of God. Whatever mess you are in right now, God SEES you.

The Rich Young Man, the Beloved One

Now we jump forward to the New Testament, where the story in Mark chapter 10 is titled “The Rich Young Ruler.” By all accounts, this man seemed to be an accomplished fellow. Not only in society but also spiritually (“All these (commandments) I have kept from my youth”). But then he has an encounter with Jesus, and everything changes. After Jesus presents the commandments to the young man, who responds in confidence, v. 21 says, “And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” Much gets said about Jesus's instruction to the young ruler. (Eg: Is this prescriptive? How much should other Christians also follow this command? Must we also sell all we have?) But I want to

zero in on seven words that sum up Jesus's response to the man and his question: "And Jesus, looking at him, loved him." Can we see ourselves in the Rich Young Ruler's shoes? Maybe we went to church on Sunday, helped out a few people this week, read our Bibles each day, and - here's the kicker - feel confident in our own efforts to achieve salvation. Jesus sees us and loves us, even while we were still prideful sinners. Whatever comfortable stupor we are stuck in right now, God SEES you and LOVES you. And He is calling us to something greater.

Simon Peter, the Forgiven One

Turning forward a bit, we arrive at Luke 22, a jam-packed chapter. In it, Judas decides to betray Jesus, the beautiful last Passover supper is celebrated, and Jesus along with his disciples arrive in the Garden of Gethsemane for Jesus's last prayer, his betrayal, arrest, and mocking. In the middle of this action-packed sequence is v.61. Leading up to it, Peter is in the courtyard, scared and warming himself by the fire. Maybe adrenaline was running high from the evening and the terror of his Rabbi's arrest. Maybe he was exhausted, trying to stay awake and be a faithful friend. Either way, he was most definitely trying to go unnoticed, but he keeps getting called out for being associated with Jesus, the arrested One. His Galilean accent gives him away. The third time that Peter vehemently denies association, a rooster crows, and then v. 61 says, "And the LORD turned and looked at Peter." So we see it again. The simple mention of the LORD looking at His creation. In this case, Jesus looks at Peter even under the duress of His trial in the High Priest's house. The most important trial in the world. The trial that would lead to forgiveness and salvation for His chosen. Whatever sin is in your rearview right now, God SEES you and LOVES you and died to FORGIVE you.

"Truly here I have seen Him who looks after me." (Gen. 16:13)

These are not just glances. The God Who Sees comforts Hagar the runaway. The God of eternal glory looks at the wealthy young ruler with love, asking Him to give up everything for the sake of Someone Better. The God of salvation looks at his best friend Peter even after being rejected by him. For each of these three people, God saw them and loved them completely by buying reconciliation for eternity. We have been journeying through Romans 8 as a church body, and I have been thinking about what it means that God is FOR us in Christ. This is it! God created us. He sees us. He loves us. He died, rose, and ascended for our reconciliation. And because we are now reconciled to God in Christ, we are seen and loved and forgiven. Nothing will ever change that truth.