

Genesis 16
The God Who Sees Me
WRCoB Mother's Day 5.12.24

I am sensitive to the fact that for some
Mother's Day is not an easy day.

Some didn't have very good mothers.
Some never knew their mothers.
Some have had their mothers pass on.

While still others, never became a mother.

For whatever reason, some don't enjoy Mother's Day
And I get that!

But let me say this, all of us here
Whether we were raised in healthy or unhealthy homes
Are all products of motherhood.

We're all children of mothers.
Children who needed love, care, and attention.

Lots and lots of attention!

If you have ever been around children
You've notice how kids demand attention
This tremendous desire to be seen.

They're at the playground
The skating rink
At home doing a new dance move

*“Hey, Dad, Dad, watch me!
Look at me, Mom, watch me, MOM!!!”
Over and over, and over again.*

And the attentive Mom or Dad stop what there're doing
And watch their children
Over and over and over again.

The flip side of that coin
Is that mothers often feel invisible.

If you are a stay-at-home mom
Much of your day is spent alone
Much of your work goes unnoticed.

And when your family does come home
Even then they don't see you.

Hilary Price, from the People's Church in Toronto
Explains it this way:

It all began to make sense—the blank stares, the lack of response, the way one of the kids will walk into the room while I am on the phone and ask to be taken to the store. And inside I'm thinking, Can't you see? I am on the phone.

Obviously not. No one can see if I'm on the phone or cooking, or sweeping the floor or even standing on my head in the corner because no one can see me at all. I am invisible.

~~

Mothers can feel that way

Nobody sees them
 Nobody understands them
 Nobody cares for them

They work all day long without a single, “thanks, mom”.

Well, magnify that feeling by a 100
 And you’ll begin to know how Hagar felt.

~~

Hagar felt misused, abused, and confused

Hagar is not your typical Mother’s Day story.

She is not a heroine like Miriam
 Or Deborah, or Ruth
 Or Mary Magdalene
 Or Priscilla

She is a nobody.
 But God saw her as somebody.

For she, too, is a mother in the Bible
 And deserves our attention.

~~

She is an enslaved young Egyptian woman
 A maidservant to Sarai.

Her life is not her own!

She didn’t choose to be Sarai’s personal slave.

She didn’t choose to live her life
 Shackled to the demands of her owners.

She didn't choose to bear a child
To cover for Abram and Sarai's barrenness.

She had no choice.

All of this forced upon her by the culture she lived in
Like so many enslaved black women
In our own shameful history.

It's no wonder she felt hostile towards her master
When she learned she was pregnant.

But that only made matters worse.

Sarai dealt harshly with Hagar

And so, Hagar what enslaved people do
When they can't take it any longer
She ran away.

~~

It's the same with the "Wives of Boko Haram."
Forced to become enslaved wives to terrorists.
They, too, if given a chance, flee.

It's not easy to be a mother in those conditions.

The Chibok girls were abducted from their school dorms
April 14, 2014, 10 years ago last month.

Out of the 276 girls, 80 to 100 remain unaccounted for.

Those who initially escaped were embraced
Back into their communities

But those who became wives
And bore children from their terrorist husbands
Did not find it easy at all.

They were shunned by their own communities
Looked upon as dirty
Colluding with their captors.

Honest to goodness
I heard of one Chibok girl
Who found it so hard to live back home

That she left home and returned to the Sambisi Forest
Only to find her husband killed.

Another terrorist then took her as his wife.

Motherhood, is not easy.

If they had a Mother's Day celebration back in the day
Would Hagar feel like celebrating?

Would Abram recognize Mother's Day
By giving Hagar a box of chocolates
A dozen red roses
And a meal out at Red Lobster?

What about Sarai.

She's the one who'd demand a Mother's Day celebration
Leaving Hagar at home to babysit
And sweep and mop the floors.

And so, during the Mother's Day celebrations
Hagar runs away
I don't blame her at all.

And in the wilderness God finds her.

And she has this conversation with God
The longest recorded conversation
Between God and a woman in the OT.

Hagar is also the only woman in the Bible
Who gives God a name

She names God, *El Roi*, which means in Hebrew

El Roi-The God Who Sees Me

~~

Hagar flees from an untenable situation
And what happens?

She runs right into God in the middle of the wilderness.

Isn't that how it is?

You reached the end of your rope
Nowhere to turn
Hopeless and despairing
Trying to run away from it all

And God meets you.

As Hilary Price writes

Hagar doesn't know what she wants. She knows what she doesn't want. She doesn't want to be treated as a nonperson, as an invisible person.

She doesn't realize what her greatest need is until she meets the God who meets that need. And she names him, El Roi, the God who sees me.

~~

The Bible lists several names for God, here's a few

- Elohim—the Creator God
- Yahweh—the Covenant-maker God
- El Shaddai—the Almighty God
- Adonai—The Lord of lords

But you know, the truth is

God's names carry little meaning

To someone who's never experienced God.

And so, when God spoke to Hagar

This experience above of all experiences

She just had to name it.

El Roi—the God who sees me

~~

There is something so important about being seen

In human nature

You don't really understand human nature unless you know why a child on a merry-go-round will wave at his parents every time around—and why his parents will always wave back (Bill Tammeus).

To be seen, and to be known is so essential.

When someone sees you, eyeball to eyeball
It conveys a sense of value and significance.

And how much more when it is God who sees you.

The psalmist says the same.

Psalm 139 NIV

**¹ You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.**

**² You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.**

**³ You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.**

**¹⁵ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.**

~~

Hagar, the immigrant from Africa
An Egyptian slave to Jewish masters
Felt overworked and undervalued

Her life was an endless cycle of tasks
Performed for her masters
A slave to do their bidding.

Go collect firewood
Go fetch water
Cook the meal
Wash the clothes

Be there for your master in the middle of the night
 Raise his children
 Bear the brunt of Sarai's harsh treatment

Could anyone feel less significant than Hagar?

And yet in her darkest most hopeless hour
 The God sees her uplifts her
 And changes everything

Hagar, you are significant
 Hagar, you are loved
 You are valued
 You BELONG to me.

God sees her and God saves her.

~~

What difference does it make to know
 God sees you and is present with you?

What difference does it make
 That your God,
 Eloim,
 El Shaddai,
 El Roi is there for you?

Why, it makes all the difference in the world.

Hagar longed to be loved and valued
 No one around her could satisfy that need.
 God did.

~~

Let's make sure that doesn't happen to our loved ones.

When your children demand your attention
Look at me, Dad! Look at me, Mom!

Look at them
Even if it is a hundred times a day.

When you meet other family members
Co-workers, friends, church members
Those in the check-out line

Look at them eye ball to eyeball
Because they need to know
They are loved and are of value.

~~

So, let's be gentle with each other this Mother's Day

Let's look and see those moms with happy families

But let's also look and see moms who have passed on.

Let's look and see moms who have lost children
Moms who wish they had children

Single moms trying their best to raise kids.

The moms who, for whatever reason
Are doing a poor job raising kids
Because of their own demons

We see you, God sees you
You are loved and valued
You are God's own.
You are God's beloved.