**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**31st July 2022**

**Genesis 21:9-21**

**Gathering**

Eventually

It all goes pear-shaped

The promise has been given

But humanity tries to force the promise’s hand

And push it to be fulfilled

In humanity’s time

Thats Chronos timing

Time that can be measured

Dictated

God’s timing is Kairos

This measures moments

Moments where their time has come

And promise belongs to the latter

It involves a patience in waiting for these moments

Such patience is the measure of a patriarch

Such patience grows wisdom

Trust

Expectation

But when you push the promise

Into a measure of time

The bigger moment is lost

Only those who dare

Who see the revelation such a moment brings

Choose to belong to it

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish and thank you as always… and we are invited to join you today in sharing our story of faith and our moment of worship…

We’re still with Abraham… still under the promise… expect it has been fulfilled but it is not turning out the way anyone had expected… After twenty-five years of waiting and wondering… the reality is somewhat more complex and difficult… Welcome to the story of Hagar and Ishmael…

**Prayer**

Gathering God

In your calling us

We gather

Find our home in you

And make time with you

May we pause enough

To listen

And to hear

The love that surrounds us

And holds us

Now

May we find silence

To hold our fears

That we can speak them

And trust love

Can redeem them

Now

May we know presence

Your presence

Within us

And know its peace

And promise

And possibility

Now

Creator

May we lay down our prejudices

And our fears

And our burdens

Shaped by how we have treated others

And be renewed

Reborn

Now

May we live into those kairos moments

Those unique and special moments

When we realise something

Affirm something

Discover something

New and life-giving

And

in such moments

May we pause again

And recognise the love

That called us here

Let us share the global prayer together

**Scripture Background**

We have finally crossed the promise moment with Abraham and Sarah… for the last six weeks we’ve been in expectant mode… Well ‘expecting’ is now over… for Sarah and for her slave girl Hagar… both have had children… and it is all a bit of a mess…

It was Sarah who felt this promise thing had to speeded up… and wondered… given she was barren… maybe Abraham might lie with her slave Hagar… a foreign Egyptian… And so it was… and low and behold… Hagar became pregnant… Joy for everyone… and Ishmael was born… an heir…

Except… this was not the plan… and God was going to be sticking to the original one… A decade later… wonder of wonder… Sarah follows Hagar… and becomes pregnant and Isaac is born…

But this just causes tension in the Abrahamic household… You can just see it bubbling away until Sarah has had enough… and then we witness the worst of the patriarchal pair… caught up in ambition, racism, and fear…

**Scripture**

**Reflection**

I come from a tradition in my house… where you aren’t allowed to put your washing out on the line on a Sunday… I am sure there are quite a number listening today who would agree with that… Why would you want to do that anyway on a Sunday… there are six other days for washing… I am told…

Personally, I really don’t mind… I won’t be telling anyone… but the etiquette for washing is quite expansive… There is a particular way of doing it… apparently… and we even have the expression… “you hang out a lovely washing”… and it is a lesson I repeatedly fail to learn…as… when I have hung it out… it has at times… been rehung… given our washing line is hidden from everyone… I couldn’t see why it mattered… but apparently it does…

But with such etiquette… there is something more than simply having all your whites together… Beneath these rules… dare I suggest there is a quiet judgement going on… a level of comparison… where you can tell ‘what people they are’ by the way the washing is hung out… It is a foreign language to me… but… in truth… I do exactly the same comparing the size of someone’s car… how people speak… etc… We all have a bundle of references against which we measure others…

I have no idea what Abraham and Sarah’s washing line looked like… but in the story today… they are airing a whole lot of dirty laundry…

This is perhaps one of the worst stories in the Bible… Hagar and Ishmael being sent out to die in the desert… given meagre supplies so that they would indeed die… Sarah devising a plan for her own ambition for Isaac… Abraham bumblingly going along with it… ultimately blaming Sarah for everything… and even God getting in on the prejudice and racism… because it is no less than that… directed towards Hagar… the Egyptian… and how she has no place in the nation God is proposing… though Ishmael will have one himself as a pay-off… and traditionally that has been understood to be the Arabs and Islam…

Anyway you read this… and it is a shocking state of affairs… personal ambition… greed… treating the least as if they are worthless… using and abusing them for your own means (a child)… and then casting them off when they no longer suit your cause…

And it is all there… all the dirty laundry… of racism… prejudice and personal ambition…

But the wonder of our scripture… is that all that IS there… all that dirty laundry laid out for everyone to see… It could be unique in world religions that so much negative, and failed humanity is written into our scriptures and revealed as God’s meeting place…

Such stories as these… that are given to us to explore faith… do not tell us how wonderful the patriarchs were… move us beyond reading these stories as mere superstition… but see them clearly as complex and human realities…

But… it offers something even more important than permission to be human… When your dirty laundry is out there for everyone to see… it keeps us from a tendency towards an arrogance in our religion and a self-assurance about our faith…

We can’t laud our faith over folk…… make it exceptional… when the dirty laundry is so obvious… Instead… such stories are given to us and invite us to be self-critical… humbled… teach us to engage critically with our faith stories… Not all the things our faith heroes did were good or wise or loving…

This ability to be critical… is quite rare in religion… but it is necessary in order to have a faith that is less superstition… and more life-affirming… inviting the ability to criticise and correct ourselves… and thus grow into something redeemed, reborn and renewed…

**Prayers for Others**

Let us not use words

Let us use images

That speak more deeply and personally to us all

Creation

Poverty

Hunger

Cost of Living

Conflict

Family

**Benediction**