

Sunday, June 25, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
“Tell in the Light”
Genesis 21:8-21 and Matthew 10:24-39

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants answer, “Discuss a time you were faced with a difficult decision and trusted God for an answer. Did anything stop you from following through with the decision?”

Genesis 21:8-21. Context. Before Sarah had conceived her son Isaac by Abraham, they had agreed that Abraham should take her slave girl Hagar as a wife and try to father offspring by her. When Hagar gave birth to a son, Sarah and Hagar had a falling out, and Sarah spurned Hagar. Later, after Sarah had given birth to a son, Isaac, and after Isaac was weaned, Sarah made Hagar and her son move. Elsewhere we learn that Hagar’s son was named Ishmael. In the Qur’an, when this story is rehearsed, it is Ishmael who is the favored son and Isaac, the one who is spurned. The ancient desert tribes, the Bedouin, regarded Ishmael as their progenitor, as do modern day Arabs.

Matthew 10:24-39. Context. This week’s reading is the conclusion of the “Missionary Discourse,” where Jesus is looking ahead, not only to his own suffering, but also to that of his disciples, both then and since then, as God’s kingdom will draw nearer and nearer and God’s true “family” will be set apart for ultimate blessing, however nasty it gets in the meantime.

Read Genesis 21:8-21 and Matthew 10:24-39

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the text?

Read Genesis 21:8-21 and Matthew 10:24-39 again -

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- Who are the people in your life who affirm the best in you? What scriptures let you know how valuable you are to God? In what ways has God affirmed how much God loves you?
- *“And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him (Genesis 21:17-18).”*
The message from God was, *“Don’t be afraid.”* What is your natural reaction when you are afraid? Is it fight or flight? What did Hagar do?

- *'So, start shouting. "What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops" (Matthew 10:27). Jesus tells us that even though we feel that we don't have all the answers, we can go on as though we do—because we know where the answers are.'* Celebrating before we have the solutions for life's challenges is not often practiced among Christians. With Matthew's encouragement, is this something that you find easy or difficult?
- Jesus is talking to the disciples before sending them out in ministry. I imagine that they would have been overwhelmed and unsure that they could fulfill the expectations of their assignment. They were being asked to do the same things as their master; and in their minds, they may have been saying, "Can I really do that?" *"So, do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31, NRSV).* Has there been a time in your life that you have felt unqualified for the task that you have been asked to perform? Are there times in your life when you have felt like an imposter at work or in ministry? What helped you move forward?
- *"Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).* Are you prepared to share your faith story? How can our churches help members feel more equipped to share their stories? In your small group, discuss:
 - When fear is present, I grow my faith by ...
 - This week, I invested in my discipleship by ...
 - My story about the love of God that the world can't live without is ...
 - This week, I shared my relationship with God with ...

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

Faithful God, as our lives encounter times of transition and transformation, please deepen our faith so that we are not overwhelmed with fear. Strengthen our faith to give us the patience to wait on your answers for direction and assurance. Teach us to live and love like our Master Teacher, Jesus. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
 hallowed be thy name.
 Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.