

Going deeper with Sarah, Abraham and Isaac



The first week of Advent is usually dedicated to the *patriarchs*. Who are these people? In the narrowest definition they are Abraham, his son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob. The mothers of these sons are given the title *matriarchs*.

Abraham (Abram) and Sarah (Sarai) were married before Abraham set out from Ur on his long and eventful journey to the land of Canaan. The core of Sarah's story is that she is barren which is a very difficult thing for her to deal with. Biblical references to Sarah can be found in Genesis 11, 12 and 16 -25. As you read the story there are aspects of it which are alien to us and may cause us to look unfavourably on Sarah's character. As with so many Biblical characters, Sarah is thoroughly rounded, with both positive and negative aspects. She is thoroughly human! One of her most appealing aspects is her faithfulness to Abraham through really challenging circumstances; less appealing is her treatment of Hagar, Abraham and Sarah's Egyptian's servant who, at Sarah's behest became Abraham's concubine.

Both Abram and Sarai were given the names we are most familiar with, Abraham and Sarah when the covenant between God and Abraham was established. This was the promise made by God that Abraham would be the "father of many nations" and that God would be the God of those nations. You can read about this in Chapter 17.

One of the most reflected upon passages in their life stories is found in Genesis 18. 1 -16. It is here that they receive three visitors, who can be interpreted as being God. These visitors foretell that Sarah will conceive and give birth to a son. Much is made of the fact that Sarah laughed – it could be noted that in the previous chapter, when Abraham is told the same news, he also laughed. (Gen. 17. 17) An interesting verse is 18. 10 when Abraham is told "Sarah, your wife will have a son." In this patriarchal age the gift is not attributed only to Abraham.

The story of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac is challenging, as their lives were, but it is a supreme lesson in faithfulness, patience and trust.

Ponderings:

Why do you think Isaac's birth occurred so late in Sarah's and Abraham's lives?

What do we learn about our own relationship with God as we consider this?

