



The Birth of Isaac

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

It's really good to be back today. Last week we drove out to South Dakota and spent a couple of nights in an old west town called Deadwood. For all you history buffs, that's the town where the famous Wild Bill Hickock met his demise. It was during a poker game at the Number 10 Saloon. John McCall shot him in the back of the head out of a desire for revenge for Wild Bill killing McCall's brother. The town stages a reenactment every day at noon or thereabouts. The day we were there I was picked from the audience to sit across from Wild Bill at the card game. When Bill was shot, the bullet exited his head and went through the man's hand sitting across from Wild Bill. That was me... All in all we had a great time.

Now back to our scripture and sermon... What would you do if the Lord God came to you at whatever age you happen to be and informed you that you either were already pregnant or would become preggo sometime in the future when God decides the time is right. What would you do? Near the end of Genesis, chapter 17 God informs Abraham, when he was already 100 years old, he would become a father. The first thing Abraham did was fall on his face, not in awe or joy, but in laughter. Sarah also laughs, even though she denied it. Abraham and Sarah were both way too old to be having children. Until the Lord appeared they had long ago given up on the prospect of becoming parents. Abraham and Sarah

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aren't the only Biblical couple to have a miraculous childbirth. There's Hanna, who gave birth to Samuel. Then there's Zechariah and Elizabeth who had John, who grew up to be John the Baptist. Then of course the whole birth of Jesus with Mary and Joseph... I guess you could say these were all unplanned pregnancies. A woman faced with an unplanned pregnancy today has more options than Sarah did all those years ago. Unfortunately, one of those options is an abortion. In the US alone more than 930,000 legal abortions were performed in 2020, the latest year I could find accurate stats for. This week I heard someone talking on the radio about an organization that offers free ultrasounds for women who are thinking about getting an abortion. It's not one of those cheap ultrasounds like I remember from when we were  having our kids. (SLIDE) This is one of the newer 3D ultrasounds where they give you a real clear picture where you can actually see the baby's face and count his or her fingers and toes. 

(SLIDE) It's remarkable that after seeing their baby, an overwhelming number of women choose to have their babies and never think about having an abortion again. I did a little research and discovered the name of the organization is Preborn!. I read through their 2022 Annual Report and I'm extremely impressed. In 2022 Preborn provided over 92,000 ultrasound scans (For free). They placed 69 new ultrasound machines in clinics across the country. They trained nearly 2000 people on how to invite pregnant women to consent to the ultrasound scan while at the

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same time telling them about the love of Jesus. All of this amazing work resulted in 53,253 babies being saved from the abortion industry. In addition, 9,896 people made commitments to Jesus Christ. All of that in just one year! The numbers since PreBorn came into existence are staggering (in a good way...). To date PreBorn! has provided 270 ultrasound machines across the country. They need more...

Abraham and Sarah would have loved to have had a baby, especially a son, when they were in the prime of their lives. That wasn't God's plan. God's plan was to test their faith and so the birth of Isaac was not going to happen until the couple had given up on becoming parents. I love the way our translations says, "it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women." I mean she was 90 years old! God's plan involved showing Abraham, Sarah, and by extension all of us God's power isn't limited to our tiny imaginations. God proves beyond all doubt that nothing is too hard for the Lord!

PreBorn!, and their founder, Dan Steiner, trust in the promise that there is truly nothing God cannot do. Steiner began with a vision, "To Glorify Jesus Christ by Leading & Equipping Pregnancy Clinics to Save More Babies & Souls." To clarify, a pregnancy clinic is not an abortion clinic. One major way they do this is by providing Pregnancy Clinics totally free ultrasound machines and the training for the clinic personnel on how to offer the free scans to their patients who are

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considering an abortion. They also introduce their patients to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When they began in 2015, they travelled from clinic to clinic training the personnel and installing the ultrasound machines. They literally lived in their van and used every bit of the donations they received to further their mission.

PreBorn! is using the technology of the ultrasound scans to introduce these women and men who are uncertain about what they want to do to the real baby inside the mom's womb. At the same time they are telling them about the eternal salvation they have in Jesus. From there the Holy Spirit does the rest... It's the same ultrasound faith that caused Abraham and Sarah to never give up on the promise God made many years earlier that they would have a child and Abraham would be the Father of an entire nation. The founder of PreBorn!, an average guy named Dan Steiner had the same ultrasound faith. The results speak for themselves.

PreBorn hasn't totally stopped abortions, but over 220,000 babies have been saved so far in just 7 years.

What can you do with the ultrasound faith God gave you when you were Baptized? You can pray. I hope you're praying every day, several times a day! Too often we forget to pray until we're in a pickle. Maybe, just maybe, if we exercised our ultrasound faith through prayer we might have avoided the pickle in the first place... Even so, once in the pickle, prayer can still help us find our way out. Sometimes, we do pray and pray and pray some more, but nothing seems to

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happen. During those times, we might think God isn't listening or that God doesn't care about the pickle you're in? What if Abraham and Sarah had given up? Who would have blamed them? I mean a baby so long after Sarah was no longer in the "way of women..." It's impossible! Oh, wait a minute... Maybe what we're supposed to take from this story is when we don't give up, when we persevere and keep going, God will indeed provide the ultrasound faith we need.

For most of us, ultrasound scans help rule out certain birth defects. The skilled technician can measure the size of the chambers of the infant's heart to see if there are any defects. They measure the size and shape of the baby's head to determine the size of the brain... Of course, they can tell most of the time exactly what the sex of the baby is. In the old days you had to rely on s old wife's tales to decide the gender of the unborn or preborn baby. For example, if the baby kicked a lot it would be a boy. Or, if the mom craved sweets like ice cream and cookies, it would be a girl, while if she craved sour foods, like pickles, then it was a boy.

Sarah and Abraham certainly didn't have the advantage of ultrasound technology, but they had something even better. They had ultrasound faith in the promise of God. Here's the thing about God. When God speaks, stuff happens. A promise of God will never fail. Our problem is sometimes our ultrasound machine has come unplugged. The faith that was meant to give us the strength to overcome the obstacles of life can sometimes become short circuited. We were intended to

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be people of ultrasound faith, but sometimes it seems our mustard seed of faith has dried up. Even the disciples had the same problem. In Mark's Gospel, the disciples panicked when their boat got caught in a terrible storm on the Sea of Galilee. They woke Jesus up and asked him why he didn't care that they were about to die. Remember his words after he calmed the storm?... Jesus said, "Why were you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Those wretched disciples. They have ***no*** faith! Matthew and Luke go a little easier on them. In the same story in those Gospels, Jesus says, "Oh, you of ***little*** faith..." At least according to Matthew and Luke they have *some* faith. In Mark's version they have none at all... Yet, look at what the Holy Spirit did in and through them! We know the storm and the comments from Jesus were before the resurrection. The raising of Jesus from the dead changes everything. It puts the power of the Holy Spirit into you and empowers you to have ultrasound faith...

A tiny baby boy named Isaac was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and to Sarah. Living in the Kingdom of God for all eternity is the promise Jesus fulfilled for you. Do you have the ultrasound faith of Sarah and Abraham to live each day under the reign of Jesus, your Lord? When you do, storms don't stop coming at you, but somehow they just don't seem as scary.

May the Lord continue to use PreBorn! to save many more babies and souls. May the Lord grant the ultrasound faith of Sarah and Abraham. Amen.