

GOD KEEPS PROMISING

(Isaiah 7:10-16)

- Intro: Mondays are usually my Sabbath Day.
- That's my day for household chores.
 - #Laundry.
 - #Cleaning house.
 - #Taking care of:
 - *Yard.
 - *Car.
 - When it's not too cold.
 - #I also take a bike ride.
 - In more recent times I've added another activity to my Sabbath.
 - #Every Monday I have a standing appointment.
 - *Play date with my granddaughter.
 - +Who will be 8 months old next week.

Before she was born.

- We knew she would be a girl.
- Her parents picked out a name for her.
 - #But they wouldn't tell anyone the name they had chosen.
 - *Perhaps in fear one of us might:
 - +Wrinkle our nose.
 - +Say something stupid:
 - = "Ooh, that's a terrible name!"
 - = "Have you considered _____?"
 - #Not even WikiLeaks spilled the beans on this one.
 - #Only after she was born.
 - *Did we learn that her name is Sophia.
 - +Greek word.
 - +Greek name.
 - =Means "wisdom."

Our lessons for today tell us about a couple of other babies.

- Two babies in very different:
 - #Times.
 - #Places.
 - #Circumstances.
- Both of whom are given the same Hebrew name.
 - #Immanuel.
 - *God-with-us.

I. Isaiah Speaks Of The First Immanuel.

A. In The Time Of Ahaz.

1. Ahaz.
 - a. King of Judah.
 - Southern Kingdom.
 - #After the Northern Kingdom of Israel split off.
 - *Following the death of Solomon.
 - +@922 B.C.
 - b. 735-715 B.C.
2. Assyria was the super power of the day.
 - a. Flexing its muscles.
 - b. Expanding its territory.
 - c. Threatening its weaker neighbors.
3. Israel and Syria.
 - a. Formed an alliance to resist the Assyrian menace.
 - Under Tiglath-Pileser III.
 - b. Pressuring Ahaz to join them.
 - c. Threatening:
 - Overthrow him.
 - #If he didn't cooperate.
 - Replace him with a more compliant puppet king.
 - #Who would do their bidding.
4. Ahaz had his own ideas.
 - a. Resist the pressure.
 - Of the Israel/Syria Alliance.
 - b. Cut his own deal with Tiglath-Pileser.

B. Isaiah Had Other Advice.

1. Isaiah.
 - a. Prophet.
 - b. Spoke for God.
2. Isaiah counseled against:
 - a. Plan A.
 - Joining the Israel/Syria Alliance.
 - b. Plan B.
 - Cutting his own deal with the Assyrians.
3. Isaiah counseled Plan C.
 - a. Maybe I should call it Plan G.
 - God.
 - b. Trust God.
 - “Forget about political and military alliances.”
 - “God has promised to protect you.”

4. God's promise fell on deaf ears.
 - a. Ahaz refused:
 - To listen.
 - To trust.
 - To believe.
 - b. Ahaz was stubborn.
 - c. Ahaz had his mind made up.

C. But God Kept Promising.

1. Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz.
 - a. How our first reading begins.
 - b. Isaiah 7:10.
2. Maybe Ahaz was:
 - a. Stubborn.
 - b. Slow:
 - To listen.
 - To trust.
 - To believe.
3. But God kept promising.
 - a. "Ask for a sign."
 - God said.
 - Usually discouraged.
 - #Because the demand for a sign.
 - *Evidence of a lack of:
 - +Faith.
 - +Trust.
 - b. "Just name it."
 - Anything in the heavens above.
 - #Think:
 - *Lightning.
 - *Eclipses.
 - *Meteor showers.
 - Anything in the depths of the earth.
 - #Think:
 - *Earthquakes.
 - *Volcanoes.
 - Anything in between.
4. Ahaz.
 - a. Full of false piety.
 - b. Declined.
 - “Oh, I wouldn't want to put the Lord to the test.”
 - #Isaiah 7:12.

5. God kept promising.
 - a. "I'm going to give you a sign anyway."
 - Young woman.
 - Baby.
 - #Named Immanuel.
 - *God-with-us.
 - b. Who was the young woman?
 - Ahaz's wife?
 - Isaiah's wife?
 - Another woman?
 - #We don't know.
 - c. Who was the baby?
 - Ahaz's son?
 - Isaiah's son?
 - Somebody else's son?
 - #We don't know.
 - d. What we do know is that God promised:
 - Before a baby could be:
 - #Conceived.
 - #Born.
 - #Grow out of baby food.
 - #Learn to know right from wrong.
 - Threat from:
 - #Israel.
 - #Syria.
 - *Would be gone.
 - That's not very long.
 - #When I was at Sophia's house last Monday.
 - *It was almost lunch time for her.
 - #Usually she takes a little while to warm up to me.
 - *Let me:
 - +Hold her.
 - +Play with her.
 - *Although that time is continually shrinking.
 - #While she was eating.
 - *She was in her seat on the kitchen counter.
 - *Her dad was spooning:
 - +Previous night's grownup dinner.
 - =Run through the blender.
 - =Ground into baby food.
 - +Into her mouth.
 - *I was sitting at the kitchen table.
 - +Sophia kept craning her neck.
 - =So that she could see me.

- #Later on I had her on the floor.
 - *Her dad was trying to wrap Christmas presents.
 - *Sophia wanted to get into the Christmas wrapping.
 - +It was so:
 - =Bright.
 - =Pretty.
 - =Appealing.
 - *I had my arms wrapped around her.
 - +So that she wouldn't get into the wrapping space.
 - +But she managed to grab a little scrap of wrapping paper.
 - =She put it in her mouth.
 - Everything goes into her mouth.
 - =When I pulled the paper out of her mouth.
 - I saw two teeth.
 - #Her front bottom teeth are already in.
 - #This baby is growing up so fast.
- That was God's promise.
 - #Before a baby could grow up.
 - *Threat from Israel and Syria would be gone.
 - *People would be saying:
 - +God is with us.
 - *So it was.
 - +Syria lasted only another year.
 - +Israel lasted about 11 years.
 - =Threat was gone.
 - =Countries were gone.

II. Matthew Also Speaks Of Emmanuel (Matthew 1: 18-25).

A. What Does The Second Emmanuel Have To Do With The First?

1. Entirely different:
 - a. Time.
 - b. Place.
 - c. Circumstances.
2. Joseph was engaged to be married to Mary.
 - a. Mary turned up pregnant.
 - b. Joseph knew it wasn't his doing.
 - c. He wanted to break the engagement.
 - Quietly.
3. God intervened.
 - a. Through:
 - Angel.
 - In a dream.

- b. Said:
 - “I promise you Mary has not been unfaithful.”
 - “I promise you that this is my doing.”
 - “I promise that this son will save his people from their sins.”
 - “You won’t even need a book of baby names.”
 - #“Name him Jesus.”
 - *Name which means:
 - +Yahweh saves.
 - +God saves.
 - +Savior.

4. Matthew.

- a. Made a leap.
 - Logic.
 - Faith.
- b. Said:
 - “Aha!”
 - “This is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy.”
 - #Virgin.
 - *Young woman in Isaiah.
 - *Has become a virgin in Matthew.
 - #Baby.
 - *Named Emmanuel.
 - +Although Jesus is nowhere else called Emmanuel.
 - =God-with-us.

5. There’s the connection.

- a. God is still with us.
- b. God is still saving his people.
- c. God is still:
 - Making promises.
 - Keeping promises.

B. Do You Need A Sign?

- 1. God gives us all kinds of signs.
 - a. Whether we ask for them or not.
 - b. Signs like:
 - Baby.
 - #In a manger.
 - #Named:
 - *Jesus.
 - *Emmanuel.
 - Cross.
 - Open tomb.
 - Waters of Holy Baptism.
 - Bread and wine of the Holy Meal.

2. God keeps promising.
 - a. To those of us who are like Ahaz.
 - Stubborn.
 - Untrusting.
 - Unfaithful.
 - Trying to cut our own deals.
 - b. To those of us who are like Joseph.
 - Fearful.
 - Suspicious.
 - Not wanting to be taken for:
 - #Patsies.
 - #Suckers.
3. God keeps promising.
 - a. Love.
 - b. Mercy.
 - c. Forgiveness.
 - d. Salvation.
 - To Sophia.
 - #Those whose life is just beginning.
 - To my dad.
 - #Those whose journey of faith is coming to an end.

Concl: God keeps promising.

- Immanuel.
- Emmanuel.
 - #God-with-us.