

Trinity 8 (2025)

This past week I did something I had not done in a while – bake a loaf of bread from scratch.

And I do mean from scratch. No bread machine, no electric mixer . . . all that kneading was all done by hand. Very laborious, especially if you are working, as I was, with whole wheat flour.

The fascinating bit in the operation is the yeast.

It works quietly, steadily and purposefully, beneath the surface. ///

If you think about it, that is how God works. He works quietly, steadily and purposefully often outside our sight.

Put another way, He is a God of providence.

What is providence? ///

It is God taking the initiative and working to bring His purposes to bear in the lives of humans and in the world.

As a lump of dough is transformed and made useful by yeast, so are humans by God's providence.

For the last several weeks we have been looking at Abraham. God's providence can be seen writ large in the life of this man.

Abraham's story begins with God choosing him and his offspring to bring blessing, salvation, to all the families of the earth . . . to be the answer to the problem identified in Genesis 3, the creature's estrangement from the Creator.

Ultimately this vocation of bringing rescue to the world would be narrowed down onto one

particular descendant of Abraham, Jesus the Messiah.

The Abraham saga begins with God's call while Abraham was in the Ur of the Chaldees, the land of his birth . . . but who can doubt that God had been at work in his life long before, preparing him for this decisive moment.

That, you see, is how God's works. That is providence.

Take, for example, another Old Testament figure, Moses. He received God's call to go liberate the enslaved Hebrews at the Burning Bush.

But long before that call, God was at work preparing Moses for this task. Let me explain.

At Moses' birth, God overrode Pharoah's edict that midwives put to death all male babies born to Hebrew women.

Following his rescue at the hand of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses grew up in the palace where he was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians. Thus, when the time came for Moses to begin his mission, he was prepared. He was a literate spokesman for God.

But Moses' preparation for this task did not end with book learning.

Remember that as a young adult he had to flee the comforts of Egypt and go into a desert region where he became a herder of livestock. There he learned survival skills, skills he would need for the task God would later assign him, the task of leading the Hebrews through the desert to the Promised Land.

Were Moses' education in the palace and his sojourn in the desert just happy coincidences? /// No, God's hand was in them both. Providence is real.

Perhaps you can look back in your life and find examples of God working silently and steadily in the background preparing you for where He would later lead you. If you can, look up and give thanks to the God of providence.

Back to Abraham. God's hand continued to direct the patriarch all the way into old age, where we find him this morning.

The task before him now was to find a suitable wife for Isaac.

As the saga continues, Abraham sends his most trusted servant back to the old country to accomplish this mission.

Abraham had apparently prepared this servant well because he too seems to have believed in the God of providence. We know this to be so because upon arrival at his destination, he put the matter into God's hands, fully believing God was in charge.

Clearly, the God of Abraham had become his God.

There is a lesson here for us. We should live in such a way that those with whom we associate see and come to know our God . . . catch the good infection . . . so that our God might become their God.

You are the only Bible some people will read. See that you reflect its trues well, and most importantly the Jesus of Scriptures.

Returning to our story, as it turns out, God's providential hand was clearly at work at the well where Abraham's servant stopped with his camels.

Before he had finished praying for divine guidance, God answered his prayer. The woman God had chosen to be Isaac's wife, Rebekah, was standing before him.

Happenstance? A happy coincidence? No, providence.

Let's bring what we have seen thus far down to where we are. God remains at work in the world and in our lives. We know this both from the Bible and experience.

Yet, there are times when God's plan is hidden from us. We find ourselves groping, as it were in a fog. How do we handle those times?

A.M. Overton was a Baptist minister from Mississippi. He points us in the right direction in his little poem "He Maketh No Mistakes":

My Father's way may twist and turn  
My heart may throb and ache,  
But in my soul I'm glad to know,  
He maketh no mistake.

My cherished plans may go astray,  
My hopes may fade away,  
But still I'll trust my Lord to lead,  
For He doth know the way.

For by and by the mist will lift,  
And plain it all He'll make,  
Through all the way, tho' dark to me,  
He made not one mistake.

Knowing God was in control. Knowing God was working behind the scenes was a controlling factor in Abraham's long life.

It sustained him when, for example, God's promise of heir did not arrive on his timetable and then again when he was tested on Mount Moriah . . . was asked to offer up Isaac.

Abraham was not perfect. He had his flaws and failures. Yet, overall, his life was characterized by faith and obedience. May the same be true in your life and my life.

Most of us begin life with great hopes and dreams. We want to make a difference, to achieve great things. Then, before we know it, comes those middle years and after them the sunset years.

Sir Francis Drake is credited with saying:

**“There must be a beginning of any great matter, but the continuing unto the end until it be thoroughly finished yields the true glory.”**

Drake’s words can be seen played out in Abraham’s life. By faith Abraham began. By faith Abraham ended.

The application with which I wish to leave you this morning is simple: Resolve to finish well.

At the moment, you may be young, you may be middle age or beyond, but the finish line is

coming for each one of us. Keep your eye on it.  
Resolve to end well.

Know that you don't walk alone. Ours is a  
God of providence. He is the yeast that works  
silently and steadily in our lives.

Those who know Jesus, the One who is the  
perfect icon of the invisible God, and who have  
said yes to His call can say with the hymnwriter:

All the way my Savior leads me.  
What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt his tender mercy,  
Who thru' life has been my Guide?

Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort,  
Here by faith in him to dwell!  
For I know, whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well.

If you don't know Jesus this morning, if He is not already a vital force in your life, your Lord and Leader, you can know Him.

Today can be your day of discovery.

Whatever burdens you are carrying on your shoulders, He stands ready to lift.

Whatever mistakes you have made in the past, He stands ready to forgive.

Whatever your perplexities, He stand ready to give light.

His arms are open in your direction. Walk into them. Don't go away without Jesus. Answer His call today.