

Isaac needed a wife. Not just in the sense that all men need wives, though that was true. But, more importantly, because God had made a covenant with Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. And that in our Judeo-Christian tradition means the covenant would continue through Isaac's children. The wife being related to Abraham was also important because this assured that the lineage of Isaac's children would be related on both sides to Abraham. And her willingness to travel also re-enforced this covenant between God and Abraham because it kept Isaac on the land God had promised to Abraham's descendants.

So Abraham sends his servant to a town where many of Abraham's kinsmen live. God works out his whole plan through the servant, Rebekkah, and Laban. God in God's love and faithfulness works out everything so that Abraham and his descendants remain in covenant with God. The responsibility of Abraham, his servant, and his kinfolk was to trust.

The same theme of God's faithfulness and love working in all things to help us stay in relationship is also in the Matthew passage. As many generations passed, Abraham's descendants had become the Israelites – the Jewish people. Along the way, they experienced exile, captivity, and slavery often due to their own fault, but God always found a way to deliver them. God loved and was always faithful with them.

In Matthew's day, the religious leaders had become corrupt and filled with self-importance. They had passed so many restrictive laws in the name of religion that they were leading the people away from their relationship to God. The yoke of the law was burdensome. God, in God's faithfulness and love, calls to them to come to him and take on his yoke. God calls us to a relationship with Him that is free from artificial constraints of religious law, but rather that is intimate. God calls us to a relationship where we learn from Jesus and we learn of Jesus. God is always faithful. Our only responsibility is to seek God and trust God.

In Romans, Paul talks about no matter how hard he tries to do what is right, he always manages to mess up. I can identify with this. Like the Israelites, we mean well, but we sometimes take actions that lead us in the wrong direction. In fact, perhaps we spend a lot of time chasing after those things that aren't of God. Oh, I like this shiny object here. No matter that it might cause me to focus too much on it rather than God. Oh, I want this new item there. No matter that to buy it, I'll have to spend the money I was going to give to the Adopted Family. Oh, I want to stay outside all summer. I don't need to be at church. I know that I should work on my relationship with God, but, instead, I want to have fun and party. Or work harder and earn more money to buy more shiny, empty things. We, like Paul, set out to do the right thing – to stay in relationship with God – but

instead we get distracted by what we think is the beauty or newness or shininess of something else.

We remind ourselves of Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz. She had a relationship with her family. They were faithful to her and they loved her. Yet, she was attracted by the beauty of Oz and its sense of adventure. She kept wandering along the yellow brick road in search of the glitter of the Emerald City, where, ultimately, she met a fake wizard with a bag of trinkets. Through it all, she was being watched and protected by a good spirit until she finally realized that the loving, faithful relationship she wanted to be was back at home. And once she realized that, she was back in relationship with that family again.

If we read the passages in Genesis between the ones we have had in the lectionary, we'll see that Abraham often veered from his relationship with God. The Pharisees and Jewish people did as well. Paul did, and we do. We all chase after the glitter of Oz, looking for something we think we lack.

But no matter what we do, God has us. A loving and faithful God made sure Isaac found the right wife to stay in a covenantal relationship with God. God didn't let the Pharisees lead the people too far away. God doesn't let us go too far away from him, either. God reaches out to us. God makes all things work together to keep us in relationship to Him. God's love and faithfulness makes sure we always find our way home.

