

The Genesis narrative is a fascinating story of the intricacies of life.

Let's just recap:

God has promised that Abraham will be a father of a great nation.

Abraham and Sarah are childless and Sarah suggests that Abraham sleeps with her maid. He does so and she produces a son Ishmael.

However when in her 90's Sarah gives birth to Isaac; she does not want Ishmael around and Abraham puts him and his mother out of the community.

Ishmael is the father to the Arab people whilst Isaac goes on to be the seed to the Jewish nation.

Thus both the Arab and Jewish worlds both see Abraham as their founding father...

Isaac marries Rebekah and they have twin sons in their later years, Esau and Jacob.

You will remember that Isaac favoured Esau and Rebekah Jacob. This is a very dysfunctional family and there is huge enmity between the two brothers.

With his mother's encouragement Jacob tricks both Esau and his father Isaac and gains the family birthright.

Jacob flees his brother's wrath and ends up back in the place where his grandfather Abraham had received the promise of God.

He has a dream and again receives the same promise that he will be the seed of a great nation.

Jacob then goes to his uncle Laban's territory and falls in love with his cousin Rachel. Uncle Laban tells him he must work seven years for her hand, but then tricks him and gives him his elder daughter Leah instead.

Jacob works another seven years to gain Rachel's hand as well. In effect Jacob marries his two cousins on his mother's side.

Jacob has thirteen boys – again this is a dysfunctional family and Jacob favours his youngest son Joseph above all the others.

And this is where we enter today's narrative.

Joseph's older brothers all hate him and they plot to kill him. Reuben however is not so sure and talks them into simply putting him in a pit with the view to coming to rescue him later.

Now some Ishmaelites come along – now these are the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham's servant girl. Isn't it fascinating how all these threads weave together. They loop back and forth to create a rich and colourful picture and story.

Jacob is taken to Egypt and next week will hear the conclusion to this quite enthralling story and of course this is the forerunner to the stories of the Exodus which are foundational to our own Christian story.

I have always thought that life was like a weaving – a tapestry if you will, with threads that intertwine and cross over to make a full colourful picture.

In life I am always intrigued at the way those threads do in fact cross over and intersect in various ways and in various places and even loop back to bring greater depth.

The story we have been hearing over these past weeks is full of that interweaving.

The various threads join together and over time form a full and fascinating picture.

As I have noted before, the story is full of betrayal, dysfunctionality and deception. It is life in all its raw glory.

But amongst it is also interwoven the story of God and of God's interaction within the complexities of human living and human relationships.

Life is full of contradictions, difficulties and challenges.

But amongst it all God is interacting and working....

The Gospel story today is a wonderful metaphor.

There are storms in life; but as companions of the Christ we need to keep our eyes firmly set on the goal of God's realm; a realm of justice, integrity, openness, inclusiveness, equity and peace for all.

So let us sit with our biblical story this week; let's wait next week's thrilling conclusion; and let us always remember that God's purpose is being fulfilled among us even when the storms of life threaten to overwhelm us.

And all I can say to that is 'Thanks be to God!'