*“Do not be afraid: for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.” – Genesis 21:17*

1. Introduction
   1. Link back to last week
      1. God’s inconceivable promise to Abraham and Sarah
      2. The fulfillment of the promise in the birth of Isaac
      3. Sarah’s laughter of derision is turned to laughter of joy at the birth of her son
2. The story quickly turns sour
   1. Abraham throwing a feast for Isaac
   2. Sarah sees Ishmael playing (or laughing) with her son
      1. Ironic because Sarah herself said that everyone will laugh with her
   3. Sarah comes to Abraham and seeks to banish Ishmael (who is unnamed throughout this vignette)
   4. Abraham is distressed, but God reaffirms his promise – Isaac will be the source of blessing to all nations
   5. God cares for Ishmael too – he will make him into a nation
   6. Sends Hagar and Ishmael into the wilderness – mistreats them
   7. Eventually the meagre food and water Abraham provides run out – Hagar despairs and leaves Ishmael to die
3. How we identify with the story
   1. At this point I think we can probably identify with one part quite easily
      1. Being cast out, alone, despised, forgotten, ostracized by friends or family, perhaps feeling out of place in the church
      2. Perhaps we have known true despair like Hagar – loss of a loved one, dire work/economic circumstances
   2. We are less eager to identify with the other side of the coin – of being in a position to ignore, ostracize, not welcome in
      1. But we are guilty of this too, just as Abraham was
      2. As we celebrate National Aboriginal Day of Prayer, we remember that the church has been complicit in this sort of disregard for human life, for the abandonment of people, the exclusion from community/communion and fellowship – right here in Canada
      3. In our local churches and in our lives of discipleship we are guilty of this kind of behaviour too
      4. This is a product of Sin

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1. Hagar and Ishmael’s story does not end there
   1. God sees the child, even when everyone – including his mother wants him away from his sight
   2. God opens Hagar’s eyes to well – to the prospect of life
   3. God remains faithful to his promise that this cast-off bastard son of Abraham will become a nation
   4. Our reading says that God was with Ishmael
2. God’s love knows no bounds
   1. God sees the people that others don’t want to see
   2. His presence remains with those who are outcasts, on the edge of society, the marginalized
   3. No one is a throwaway to God
3. Our story doesn’t end in Sin either
   1. Through the power of Jesus’ death and resurrection we are opened up to a new way of being community
   2. Our lives are transformed by God, in the power of the Holy Spirit to reflect the God who
   3. We are opened to the possibility of reconciliation with the people that we have ignored, we have pushed to the margins and left for dead
   4. This is at the core of what we as a Church are remembering on National Aboriginal day of Prayer – that our Indigenous brothers and sisters are not forgotten by God, and his church is called to love them and seek reconciliation
   5. This is true in our own church community – we are called to have our eyes be opened – to see the people who are different, who we ignore, who we don’t want to see, and to love them and care for them as God loves them.