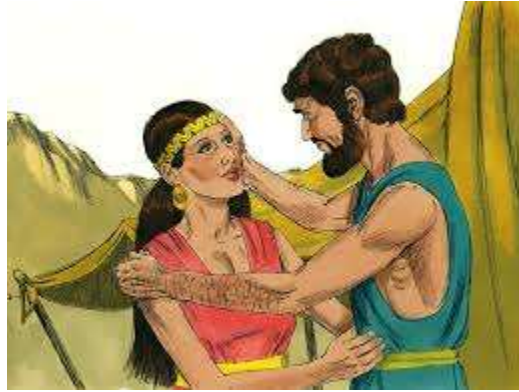


New Life Episcopal Church
Uniontown, Ohio



Isaac and Rebekah

A Sermon for the 6th Sunday after Pentecost
July 5, 2026

Rev Barbara Bond

[Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – The Episcopal Church](#)

Genesis 24

A Love Story

God loves God's people. God promised the first Jew, Abraham, that his descendants would be more than the stars of heaven, and all the ancestor stories that follow in Genesis show us how that came to pass. Basically, every generation of Abraham's offspring depended on love.

We have heard about Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, both of whom had rather harrowing beginnings. The child Isaac was almost sacrificed to God in obedience to God's instructions, but fortunately he was rescued by the intervention of angels. We did not hear this story even though it was assigned to last Sunday, because we were busy talking about Saint Peter, one of our patron saints. But that story about Isaac is surely horrible enough to make any parent gasp. In the Bible, we rather imagine that Abraham came back home with Isaac, told Sarah what had happened, and she said, "You did WHAT?" Then she probably died of a heart attack. This was a very dangerous interlude in the generations of God's people, and certainly not the only one that threatened the lineage.

Isaac survived and soon it was his time to marry, to ensure the lineage with offspring of his own. Abraham directed that Isaac's wife must come from his own family, not from the Canaanites, and so he sent his servant out to find just the right mate. The servant returned to the land of Abraham's origin and spotted Rebekah drawing water at a well. And he knew: This is the one! After negotiations with Rebekah's family, the servant brought her to Isaac. Now the story starts to look a little like Lawrence of Arabia – imagine a vast desert landscape, Rebekah riding a camel led by the servant, and Isaac waiting patiently for her arrival. Wow. Rebekah slips quickly from the camel and asks the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?" And the servant said, "It is my master." She took a veil and covered herself. Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife, and he loved her. OK! We have the necessary link! Rebekah will bear twin boys, Jacob and Essau, and the story continues.

This is an origin story. How fitting that it comes today, as we celebrate the origin of our country! The story of America's origin on July 4, 1776, is likewise stirring and somewhat romantic. For 250 years we have tried to live out the promise of our originating document, the Declaration of Independence, whose stirring words say, it is self-evident that all men are created equal.

The writer, Thomas Jefferson, believed strongly in this proposition, but at the time, he thought it only applied to men who owned property. It did not apply to women, and it certainly did not apply to slaves. It took the corrective of another 87 years to include slaves, with Abraham Lincoln's issuing of two other important writings: the Emancipation

Proclamation of January 1863, and his short address at the battlefield of Gettysburg in November of that year, four months after the pivotal battle of Gettysburg. The Civil War raged because the slavery issue had not been dealt with earlier. Lincoln's words at Gettysburg reminded his audience that the work of liberation was incomplete. The Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana said in 1905, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." (The Life of Reason, 1905). Looking back over our 250-year American history, I think Santayana was on to something. Mistakes from the past come back to haunt us, and if we don't learn from them, the mistakes are repeated. Our founders' failure to deal with slavery in 1776 perpetuated our Original Sin another 89 years. The Declaration of Independence was a beautiful idea whose incompleteness was only revealed over time.

What has helped us to continue the work of the beautiful idea? I think it is the same as the generational story of the Jews. Their story was perpetuated through love stories, including lots of human mistakes, but the love of God for God's people made the long story of salvation possible. Likewise, I think love is the answer for Americans. God gave the Jews some rules for living, and Jesus reduced them to two: love God and love your neighbor. My favorite Episcopal slogan is God loves you, No exceptions! It all deals with love. We are still learning to practice it.