

LAUGHTER, WONDER and CREATIVITY

So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.”

- Genesis 18:12-14

Abraham left his father’s house and his country and his relatives and followed the leadings of the Lord God to certain encampments before they arrived at the place of promise. He journeyed with his wife and their retinue of servants and their livestock. They had gone from place to place until they arrived at Bethel, where he had first built an altar to the Lord. He did not remain there however because the land would not support both Lot’s and Abraham’s households and possessions so they moved away from each other. Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron and he built an altar to the Lord. It was here, while he sat in the opening to his tent that the Lord appeared to him. When he looked up he saw 3 men standing near him. When he saw them we learn that Abraham is a model of hospitality. His heart, his tent were open to receive the visitors. They had their feet washed. They were given rest in a shady place. They were fed from the bounty of their host’s table. A feast at the welcome table. Great time and effort went into making this meal, into ministering to these traveling men. This was beyond generosity. They were not given money, food while they stood by the door and then sent on their way. They were welcomed *into* the household. They were brought into the atmosphere of the household and they disturbed the way of the household. There were adjustments made in the daily routine to accommodate the preparations for this lavish meal. This was an act of receiving the holy stranger into your life. And all strangers are holy because all strangers are other. What messages do they bring? What are the strangers, the strange ones saying to you?

To Abraham they had this say: “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him.

Listening at the door. Here is a woman of great means and great experience and great strength. She had the audacity to stand in the opening to their lives and listen. This tent was their home, opened now to receive strangers and she has opened her hearing to listen to them. What will they say? What is their message? How can we learn to listen at the threshold of our own hearts? How can we move from the heart’s deep inner recesses of comfort and complacency and stand alert, listening... listening at the threshold of the heart.

“I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him.

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.” But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. He said, “Oh yes, you did laugh.”

There is nothing like a good laugh. Especially the laughs that catch us by surprise. The best ones are those which seize us at the more inappropriate times. Like the time when:

The woman in church who shouted out of her wig which fell in mama’s lap

I Love Lucy – vitameatavegimin

Watching your child learning new habits

Like the Sunday Elaine danced out of her skirt.

Even when it is mean laughter like Garrett and me laughing at Carlene and Bridgett looking all refined and poised while they are melting on the stage in that heat

Scientists have found that laughter is a form of internal massaging that exercises the body and stimulates the release of beneficial brain neurotransmitters and hormones. A positive outlook and laughter are actually good for your health! It is documented that laughter reduces bad stress and even boosts your immune system. Laughter really is the best medicine.

And Sarah laughed to herself. Laughing at the very idea that Sarah could have a baby at her age. You mother's in here. Imagine now that you are going to have relations with your husband and get pregnant. Is that funny to you?

It is the very idea that God will do something impossible in your life

It is the very idea that you will know happiness

It is the very idea that you will escape limited thinking

It is the very idea that something for which you have stopped longing is now going to be yours.

It is the very idea of having a baby, of doing, again, what it takes to make a baby.

It is just opening oneself up to the unexpected.

She laughed because she thought about it. She did not dismiss the idea. She laughed because she imagined the awkward dance that would be Sarah and Abraham giving each other pleasure. She laughed because she saw a picture, she felt a flush of emotion, she remembered what it had been like years and years before, she knew it would be a new different, discovery. She laughed.

She laughed because she remembered the misery and palpable anguish she lived through all the years of her barrenness. She laughed at her brokenness. She laughed at her resignation, she laughed at the night she resigned herself to giving Hagar to lay with her husband. She

laughed at her fear of being replaced in his estimation. She laughed at the pain. And now, after all, after everything she had endured, she was about to exchange it all for pleasure. What a magnificent exchange: pain, frustration, jealousy, resentment for pleasure. This laughter opened the door to holy possibility.

She laughed at herself. Her laughter washed away the very residue of her bitterness. It was funny. There was no regret. The possibility was so magnificent that regret sunk beneath and drowned in the waters of creativity.

C. S. Lewis said, "Above all, the devil cannot stand to be mocked." The devil is a proud spirit and cannot tolerate being laughed at. So Sarah's laughter put the enemy to flight. Sarah's laughter released her from the bondage and oppression of misery, brokenness and fear and opened her up to holy possibility. Resentment and stress and bitterness and unforgiveness blind our eyes from seeing the wonder of God and they kill creativity. Sarah's laughter was the opening of her eyes to the wonder, the miraculous possibilities of God. She became creative through her laughter.

Laughter, wonder and creativity. With everything in life there is a place of balance.

Laughter, wonder and creativity. it is to employ imagination. Amy Tan affirms that "imagination is the closest thing to compassion."

Laughter, wonder and creativity - to birth, something from nothing.

Laughter, wonder and creativity comes from questioning. These creative powers within us are ignited when we are looking for answers. These powers burn with passion in the dance of doubt and faith, *and* the struggle between these (dance) partners of who will lead.

Laughter, wonder and creativity. The power to create your own life. Some people spend a life searching rather than creating, rather than imaging and becoming...

Sometimes we have to break some rules in order to be all that God has intended and has made possible for us. God is the example of this. The rules say that old folk can't have children. But God broke the rules. What rules are you confined by? What limitations have you bound? What chains are fettering you? Break them in laughter. Don't fight against them, they are like judo, they use the force of your own struggle against you...

Just stand back and laugh at the rule.

Laugh at the limitations.

Laugh at the chains.

Laugh at the naysayers.

Laugh at sticks in the mud

Laugh at the negative comments

Laugh at yourself...

LAUGHTER

Laughter is to loosen up

not to take yourself so seriously

to free yourself from the boxes we too often live in

explode categories

take off tradition

to transgress boundaries

Laughter is the freedom

to see

to dream

to vision

Laughter is the nerve

to reframe

to redefine

Laughter is loosening your halo a bit

WONDER

Wonder is to live a life of miracles

to sit by the water

to listen to the birds sing

pay attention to the phases of the moon

to hear Leontyne Price sing

to watch Garrett as he watches Jarard

to open the eyes of your heart to the move of God

to hear the sound of marching in the tops of the trees

to see bushes burning

to meet God in a furnace

to trust God no matter what

to see how we are connected

to let you be you

to see from the aspect of God

to see Konson transfixed at the keyboard

looking for something you've never considered before

to hear almost the entire Pre-K VBS school class in solidarity with one another crying for no apparent reason until they simply got tired.

to hear dramatized poetry

to experience spoken word

to know there is more to us than what we see

it is wonderful

is there anything to wonderful for the Lord? Can there be anything to marvelous for God to accomplish?

He's a wonder in my soul...

CREATIVITY/BIRTH

Creativity is the power to bring forth something out of nothing

to make something new from disparate parts

to birth

to give life

to meet needs

to answer a question

to provide a solution

to come to life

to create your own life

to write your own story

to bring visions to reality

to be filled with the Holy Ghost

to bear much fruit

to love someone back to health

to lead someone into a relationship with God

to come to wholeness
to birth that sparkle in your eye into a creation
to be a conduit of God's power
to manifest the Glory of God
to emulate His Excellence
to become the story you've been longing to tell

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And God did just what He said. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Now Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." And she said, "Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."