

Sermon: The Last Laugh

Scripture: Genesis 18:1-15; Matthew 9:35-10:8

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Father's Day

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Today's Old Testament reading is Genesis 18:1-15. We must recall God's covenant with Abraham starts in Genesis 12, when God first called him to move from his father's land with a promise of a great nation through his offspring. When years went by, he and Sarah took upon themselves to resolve the matter. In Genesis 17 when God told Abraham, who was 99 years old, that he will have a child through Sarah, he fell on his face and laughed. In today's passage, we will see how Sarah reacts to this news, whom she eventually gives birth to: Isaac, name that means "the one who laughs." Listen for the Word of God.

Genesis 18:1-15

<sup>1</sup> The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup> He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them and bowed down to the ground. <sup>3</sup> He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. <sup>4</sup> Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. <sup>5</sup> Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." <sup>6</sup> And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." <sup>7</sup> Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. <sup>8</sup> Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

<sup>9</sup> They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I be fruitful?" <sup>13</sup> The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' <sup>14</sup> 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." <sup>15</sup> But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "Yes, you did laugh."

In today's Gospel reading from Matthew 9:35-10:8, we find a powerful depiction of Jesus' ministry and his commissioning of the twelve disciples. This passage captures the compassionate heart of Jesus and bestowing upon his disciples the authority to continue his work and extend his love to the world. Hear now the Word of the Lord.

Matthew 9:35-10:8

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness. <sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup> therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

<sup>10:1</sup> Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. <sup>2</sup> These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee and his brother John; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Cananaean and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

<sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not take a road leading to gentiles, and do not enter a Samaritan town, <sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ <sup>8</sup> Cure the sick; raise the dead; cleanse those with a skin disease; cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

## Sermon: The Last Laugh

*Text: 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 18:13-14*

Let us pray. God who loves each and every one of us, we thank you for being our Heavenly Father. As we turn to your Word, may you look at us with a smile on your face, to shine your marvelous light, and may your gentle spirit rest upon us to guide and encourage us to do your will. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

Friends, every day is a gift and what is why it is called present. We should celebrate every day, and especially today when we have so many things to rejoice. Today, we commission the mission work of the youth heading to Selma, AL and those who will serve in our immediate neighborhood this week, as well as celebrating Father’s Day. – to all gentlemen, here in the sanctuary and those who are worshipping with us at home, Happy Father’s Day. You are spiritual father to all our children in our community through your baptismal vows and if you are fortunate enough, you might have someone who is younger that has your resemblance. So, this morning, I want to attempt to bring a smile by sharing a good dad joke to start the day: Why did the scarecrow win an award? Because he was outstanding in his field! As I beg for forgiveness from many of you, let us ponder and wonder about the blessings of sharing a laugh together, even the ridiculous ones in our lives.

Many of you have heard and heard me say, ‘we serve God who has a sense of humor,’ and all most every response I have received is a nod in agreement. The majority of us, if not all of us, have lived through today’s Abraham and Sarah’s laughing moment, when we are with another unforeseen circumstances before us. When we are presented with another unexpected episode while dealing with a plethora of other responsibilities that we are tasked with, we simply raise our hands in the air in utter disbelief accompanied by a laugh.

Yet, we agree that God has a sense of humor because God *always* comes through for us. It is God who has the last laugh, as what seemed impossible at the very moment, somehow and someday, God knows our limitations and allows us to overcome the unexpected. It is not pleasant sometimes and we are stretched beyond our comforts, but in the end, we are made to be bigger vessels with

greater capacity afterwards. Like us, Sarah's laughter revealed her doubt, but God's laughter reveals God's sovereignty over all things, especially in our lives. God calls each one of us God's very own. God looks at us and says, 'You are mine.' God's plans and promises are never thwarted by human limitations, as it is written by Paul in Romans 8:38-39:

*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Can you imagine the shock and dismay on the twelve disciples when Jesus says it is your turn to cure every disease and sickness, to have authority over unclean spirits, and to cast out demons? And to do all this work without payment? Sure, they watched Jesus minister to people, healing the sick and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom as they moved through large cities and small villages alike. It was an extraordinary calling, and it would be daunting to ordinary men. Yet, Jesus knew that his Father's laughter would resound in the end.

Today, as we celebrate Father's Day, we not only honor our earthly fathers and spiritual fathers in our congregation but also reflect upon the characteristics of our Heavenly Father. Just as fathers bring joy, love, and guidance into our lives, God, our ultimate Father, brings those qualities to perfection. God watches over us, provides for us, and even laughs with us. We are God's children, God's beloved sons and daughters adopted and called by God to do extraordinary things. It is true that the harvest is plentiful, and God sends us out as God's ambassadors with awesome powers and potentials.

So, what does it mean for God to have the last laugh? It means that even when life seems challenging and circumstances appear bleak, God's sovereignty remains intact. God knows the outcome of our struggles, and God has the final say. God who is in the reconciliation business and as our Heavenly Father above, God delights in turning our sorrows into joy, our trials into triumphs, and our laughter into everlasting hope.

God has brought laughter into our lives, turning despair into joy and impossibilities into possibilities. We must remember and recall the moments when we thought all hope was lost, only to witness God's hand moving mightily on our behalf.

Therefore, let us celebrate the laughter that comes from a relationship with our Heavenly Father. Just as God has the last laugh in the lives of Abraham and Sarah, and just as Jesus brought healing and restoration, God continues to have the last laugh in our lives today. Let us trust in God's sovereignty, knowing that God's plans for us are good through our work and deeds. That all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, let us be like the scarecrow in our mission fields – this week as we serve our neighbor around here, for our youth who are serving next week in Selma, AL, and to be seen always among our friends and neighbors as good people who are outstanding in sharing Christ's love, knowing that our prize and reward would be many crowns in our heavenly home.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:28