

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
October 13, 2023

The Last Laugh

Read Genesis 17:15-18; 18:9-15; 21:1-7

Key verse: “She became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Abraham when he was old, at the very time God had told him” (Genesis 21:2).

*Let’s celebrate Easter with the rite of laughter.
Christ died and rose and lives.
Laugh like a woman who holds her first baby.
Our enemy death will soon be destroyed.
Laugh like a man who finds he doesn’t have cancer, or he does,
and now there’s a cure.
Christ opened wide the door of heaven.
Laugh like children at Disneyland’s gates.
This world is owned by God, and He’ll return to rule.
Laugh like a man who walks away uninjured from a wreck in which his car
was totaled.
Laugh as if all the people in the whole world were invited to a picnic and
then invite them.*

I love those words written by Joseph Bayley. They remind me that God will always have the last laugh. And through faith in Christ, we will laugh *with* God—in joy, in amazement, and in gratitude.

Sometimes in life, we laugh for the wrong reasons. Abraham and Sarah did. In Genesis 17, we read how God told Abraham that his wife, Sarah, would have a son. Funny thing was, Abraham was 100-years-old and Sarah was 99. So, Abraham, the great man of faith, “fell on his face and laughed” (Genesis 17:17).

Abraham wasn’t the only one who laughed at the absurdity of this promise of God. Sarah heard it too, and she laughed at the very idea: “So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, I’m no longer able to have children and my husband’s old” (Genesis 18:12).

There is something reassuring to me that Sarah and Abraham laughed at the seeming impossibility of God's promise and yet God did not write them off. Yes, they doubted, but their life—taken as a whole—was characterized by a desire to trust and obey God. God honored their faith and obedience, in spite of their human struggle to believe God in this instance.

God understands our doubts. He does not condemn us for doubting. But He calls us to be willing to doubt our doubts, to push beyond them and use the faith that we do have:

A man came to Jesus asking help for his afflicted son. Jesus challenged this father to believe, saying, "Everything is possible for him who believes."

"I believe," said the man.

Then he acknowledged his doubts, adding, "Help my unbelief" (Mark 9:23-24). Jesus healed the man's son!

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed at the seeming impossibility of conceiving a child in their old age. But God had the last laugh, and Abraham and Sarah got to laugh with God:

"The Lord was attentive to Sarah just as he had said, and the Lord carried out just what He had promised her. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Abraham when he was old, at the very time God had told him. Abraham named his son—the one Sarah bore him—Isaac." [The name Isaac means "he laughs."] "Sarah said, 'God gave me laughter. Everyone who hears about it will laugh with me'" (Genesis 21:1-3, 6).

In the world in which we live, we easily forget that "with God, all things are possible." But if God could raise Jesus from the dead, God can and will do the seemingly impossible for those who love Him. God will have the last laugh, and we will laugh with God—in joy, in amazement, and in gratitude.

"The gospel message says: 'You don't live in a mechanistic world ruled by necessity; you don't live in a random world ruled by chance; you live in a world ruled by the God of Exodus and Easter. He will do things in you that neither you nor your friends would have supposed possible'" (from *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* by Eugene Peterson).

Thanks be to God.

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