

Sermon for Trinity UCC, Manchester, MD, June 14-20 (Ser20-24)

**Reflection Question:** What's Special in Your Life?

As an introduction to the Hebrew lesson in Genesis 18:1-15, a commentator in an online scripture/sermon website (SermonWriter.com) describes this great story of Abraham and Sarah having a baby very, very late in life says,

one emphasis of this text is the Lord's promise that Sarah will bear a son (v. 10a). That promise has its roots in God's promise to Abraham, "I will make of you a great nation," made at the time of Abraham's call (12:1-3), a promise that God repeated twice (15:4-5; 17:4-8). God further promised Abraham that Sarah would have a son and would give rise to nations (17:16)—a promise so far-fetched that Abraham fell on his face laughing at the thought" (17:17).

For a young couple of "child-bearing age," this would be seen as a special gift of a new baby. However, for a couple ready for the nursing home, this isn't exactly funny, but laughter plays itself out in both Abraham and Sarah's response to God telling them they would have a son.

The context for this story is a visit to Abraham by "three men (Yahweh and two angels) who appear at his tent (v. 2). Abraham's hospitality to the three men contrasts dramatically with the rude inhospitality that two of them will soon experience in Sodom" (19:1-11).

Abraham "laughs at the thought" of their having a child; Sarah laughs with a deep, deep laugh. "Sarah's laughter at the prospect of bearing a son (v. 12 ff.) is coupled with this question: "Is anything too hard for Yahweh?" (v. 14) For some commentators, this "brings the issue of faith into clear focus.

All this is about something extremely special happening with Abraham and Sarah. Take a few moments to read this story; read it several times and

in your reading ask yourself an important spiritual question: **What is something special happening in your life these days?**

**A Reading from Genesis 18:1-15** -- A Son Promised to Abraham and Sarah

**18** The LORD appeared to Abraham<sup>[a]</sup> by the oaks<sup>[b]</sup> of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. **2** 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. **3** He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. **4** Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. **5** 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." **6** And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures<sup>[c]</sup> of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." **7** Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. **8** 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. **9** They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." **10** 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. **11** Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. **12** So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" **13** The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' **14** 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." **15** But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh.

In spite of our stay-at-home, wear-a-mask, social distance time in which we live, is there something new and interesting happening for you? What insights about life, about what gives us meaning in these days can you name and share with another person (with you spouse, your child, your parents, a friend on the phone or in a zoom chat)? Maybe we might ask ourselves: what makes us laugh today? Laugh about something as absurd as Abraham and Sarah having a baby at a very old age? We all have our morning routines that involve getting ready for the day. If we go out to a job, we get up, get ready for work, hopefully have a moment or even more for some time to pray ("God, what is your will for my life this day? God, what can I do to make the world a better place today?") Some of you reading this have a lot of time on your hands and the days often seem long and lonely. Even so, I would ask you to think about what is special for you these days? Moreover, what is it that makes you laugh and smile?

I always include in my morning routine reading the two full pages of comics in the Washington Post newspaper. Somedays, I chuckle (that's all I can do in way of laughing), while other mornings I laugh out

loud. For instance, in today's comics (Wednesday, June 10, 2020, in the strip called, "Speed Bump," this one makes me laugh. Why? I suppose sometimes, I see myself a little like that...I have some intelligence, but you can't always see it in me. HA HA...



In our zoom worship this Sunday, I am asking folks to share something in their home that is special. Maybe that makes them laugh or feel good, warm and happy inside. I hope you find the idea of God's amazing gift of

grace to Abraham and Sarah such a special gift. Even in these hard times, you are experiencing something special and good as a gift from God. It doesn't have to nearly be as big a deal as a couple having a baby in their old age. Indeed, we might all pray that not be the special "gift" we receive from God in our old age. Something small; just something that makes you feel good, blessed a little.

You may be facing a health issue, or maybe you're going to have surgery or something like that. Still, what is it that is a blessing to you today? The awareness that there are some special people who see you as special and are praying for you. Who call you on the phone to reassure you. Who send you a card of comfort, a card that you will keep forever, a card that is special to you.

I pray that to be true for you and for me today. Amen.