

Bible Chat notes, week starting 18 6 23

Genesis 18: 1 - 15

The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

3 He said, 'If I have found favour in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. 4 Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. 5 Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way – now that you have come to your servant.'

'Very well,' they answered, 'do as you say.'

6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. 'Quick,' he said, 'get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.'

7 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. 8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

9 'Where is your wife Sarah?' they asked him.

'There, in the tent,' he said.

10 Then one of them said, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.'

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. 11 Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, 'After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?'

13 Then the Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh and say, "Will I really have a child, now that I am old?" 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.'

15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, 'I did not laugh.'

But he said, 'Yes, you did laugh.'

Story-telling

1. Imagine a skilled story-teller relating this narrative. Try to point out some ways in which this story is funny.
2. A story-teller leaves a listener or reader to make up their own minds about some things. Where does that happen in this story?

Sarah

1. How would Sarah have viewed her inability to have children, now that she is 90 years old?
2. Why did Sarah laugh when she heard the men say we would be having a baby in the next year? What was the meaning of her laughter, do you imagine?
3. Why does she have to listen from the edge of the drama?
4. How does she feel at the end of this story? Do you think she believed God, that she'd be having a baby in the next year?
5. Read also Genesis 21:1 - 6. Does laughter have a new meaning for Sarah now?

Abraham

1. Abraham had already been told by God that Sarah would be having a baby (Gen 17:19). Had he tried to tell Sarah this? Explore why, or why not.
2. In what ways does Abraham honour these men? Why was he so keen to please them?

God & the Three Men

1. Who are these three men, do you think? Are they the Lord, or what?
2. The Lord speaks explicitly in verses 13 & 14. What is the significance of the question *Is anything too hard for the Lord?*

Us

1. Might we sometimes fail to recognise when the Lord is meeting with us? How can we become more spiritually attuned? How can we hear what God is saying to us?
2. As we think about the future, how do we respond to the question, *Is anything too hard for the Lord?*