

June 17, 2020

Nothing is Impossible with God; Based on Genesis 18:1-15

Prayer:

Some of us, myself included, could use a good Belly Laugh about now. Laughter is good for the soul, it offers a cleansing and brings good needed oxygen into the lungs and the blood. Everyone feels good after a joyous bit of raucous laughter.

A new kitten arrived at the McLean home on Friday. I don't need to tell you about how much laughter and joy that brought even though the day was gloomy and my poor transplanted tomatoes are looking at me and saying, "you expect us to grow in this, are you nuts!"

So the kitten, Simba, is prancing about the place (Picture) doing twist-a-whirls as he chases the top of a pen on a piece of wool. That is joyful enough without 4-year-old Athena running up and down the hall with that twine behind her and Simba chasing it. (I can hear Athens's small feet - thump, thump, thump as she is running down the hall as I write this).

Yes humour is helpful, particularly when we are stressed. **(Pics)**

The story from Genesis we heard Chris share this morning is as humorous a story as can be related from scripture. Can you imagine 90-year-old Sarah overhearing the conversation outside the tent as she is preparing food for the travellers. When one of them says, "**I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son,**" she laughed to herself saying "**After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?**" That is probably understated, I imagine Sarah bent over her bowl laughing so hard tears are rolling down her face and into the flour. She might have been thinking the travellers had succumbed to heat stroke on their journey. "Me, a 90-year-old woman, pregnant!" "Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha.....!!" That indeed would be a miracle.

We could use a miracle about now. I expect many of you are feeling a little discouraged these days, I know I am. Outwardly we may not realize it, but we are being bombarded by so much negativity it is bound to affect us emotionally and spiritually too. I made a short list of impacts.

Let's start with the pandemic. We have been in virtual lock down for almost 3 months. We are adjusting but it is not easy. We are concerned about extending our bubble too far, we are worried about family and loved ones getting the virus. Those of us with significant health challenges remain concerned despite the good news of "the flattening of the curve."

In Vancouver, an elderly Asian man is thrust out of a grocery store and pushed down on the sidewalk. A woman, also Asian, is purposefully tripped outside a skytrain station by a passerby and falls to the ground.

Both assaults have been attributed to misguided anger at the Chinese population being responsible for the pandemic crisis.

In Kamloops a member of the Snowbirds, Capt. Jenn Casey dies in a tragic accident while on their mission "Operation Inspiration" thanking Canadians fighting against Covid-19. We are shocked by the brutal attack and death of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis only to now see footage of the brutal attack of Fort Chipewyan First Nation Chief Allan Adam. The footage shows an arriving officer jump-tackling the chief to the ground without warning, punching him in the head and putting him in a chokehold. And most recently another indigenous man Rodney Levi is shot and killed in New Brunswick. Racial unrest is causing riots in the US and spilling into demonstrations around the world.

I need to stop there because the list can go on and on. And the more it does the more frustrated, upset and discouraged I become. Perhaps you do too. There is a point where we want to just hide or run away or pretend that all of the negativity is some sort of a bad dream. At the moment I confess that I am feeling a bit "ostrich or turtle like." (Pic)I would like to just hide my head in a hole or in my shell and come out again when things are better.

"Is anything too wonderful for the LORD", says one of the travellers in this morning's Genesis passage. That was a response to Sarah's questioning the possibility of her pregnancy. Those are similar words The Angel shared with Mary in Luke's Gospel, Chapter 1:36-37 **"And now your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God."**

Those are comforting words for me. Despite the seemingly insufferable gloom we are in (the weather is not helping), I do believe in and through God everything is possible. And I will prayerfully hold on to that belief despite what seems to be the impractical, implausible and seemingly unrealistic premise that things can change for the better.

I need to prayerfully hold on to that hope, and we all do, because God needs us if a difference is to be made in the world. The new Kin-dom is not possible without us. In the interim, I find myself seeking out inspirational, hopeful and comforting words of assurance. Words like the following that come from the ancient prophets who knew that doubt, chaos and tragedy were part and parcel of life. From the 40th Chapter of the Prophet Isaiah come these familiar words:

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,

the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
²⁹ He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
³¹ but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Renewing our faith, or one might say, keeping it, in times such as these is a real test, even for a community of faith like ours. It gives ammunition to the naysayers that could remark, “see, the world is falling apart, where is your God in all of this?” What they fail to realize is that it is precisely where the Holy is at work. In the presence of adversity is where we look to God the most.

Racism, classism, sexism, prejudice, bias and a continuous quest for power that drives acts of violence among people and nations, is to our great dismay, not new. The Psalmists wrote about it. So did the prophets. And so also did the Gospel writers who told Jesus’ story.

Attempts have been made to squash the human spirit for millennia. But the human spirit, tightly enmeshed with that of a living, loving God will not be quelled.

Sarah laughed at the possibility of her potential pregnancy, but it came to pass. What does possibility look like for us today on this the 17th of June in the year 2020? What will that look like a week, a month, or a year from now? We are unsure and possibly anxious.

Nonetheless I believe in possibility. I believe a woman of advanced age can bear a child. I believe in healing the sick and casting out demons. I believe in a life after the pandemic and the potential of racial and ethnic peace. Perhaps I am naïve, but I choose not to believe that.

In the interim, while I need a little sustenance during the chaos about me, I will listen to Isaiah and try to rest and renew my strength as I am held on the wings of a God that can break through the darkness once again. And I will continue to pray for the human family coming together in new and miraculous ways.

Thanks for listening this morning. Amen