

Genesis 17-18

October 23, 2022; 9:45-10:30 a.m.

Opening Prayer

A candle is lit to recognize God's presence here with us and the illumination of God's Word among us.

Warm Up Question:

What is something you have laughed about this week?

Read: Genesis 17:1-8; 15-22

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ² And I will make my covenant between me and you and will make you exceedingly numerous." ³ Then Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, ⁴ "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸ And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding, and I will be their God."

¹⁵ God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶ I will bless her and also give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." ¹⁷ Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" ¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live in your sight!" ¹⁹ God said, "No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. ²⁰ As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year." ²² And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

1. What do you notice about this passage?

2. In the ancient world, a name conveyed the essence of a person, and giving a name conveyed rule or ownership. What do you make of Abram and Sarai's name changes?

Read Genesis 18:1-2, 9-15

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. 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.

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 be fruitful?" 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, "Yes, you did laugh."

3. What do you find funny or surprising about this passage?

4. What else do you notice about this passage?

5. Why does Sarah laugh? Lie? Disbelieve? How is Sarah's laughter different from Abraham's laughter in the first reading today? Why is Sarah rebuked and Abraham not?

6. What does this story have to say to us about God's timing and our hopes? Is there something in your life that seems too hard for the Lord?

Sharing Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer