

October 4, 2017
Genesis 18.1-15
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I have read this story many, many time before, but I've never realized quite how *sassy* God is at the end of it!

“Oh yes, you *did* laugh!”

And why *shouldn't* God react this way?

After all, Sarah has just laughed in the face of God's promise to give her a son!

...albeit with good reason: Sarah is 90 years old.

But it's not just her age that makes her scoff at the idea she would bear a child.

Sarah has gone through quite a bit in her life.

For starters, she's barren...she's *never* been able to have a child.

On top of *this*, being married to Abraham is no picnic.

I mean, the guy moves around *all* the time. For the last quarter century, they've been hopping around from place to place, never settling down for too long. That would be exhausting for people *half* their age!

And when they were in Egypt, he tried to pass her off as just his *sister*, so that the Egyptians wouldn't murder him!

And *then* he went and had a child with Sarah's servant Hagar!

To be fair, it *was* Sarah's idea (or at least that's how the story goes), *but...after* bearing Ishmael, Hagar lorded it over Sarah that *she* could have a child while *Sarah* couldn't.

And when Sarah complained to Abraham about it, he just said, "You deal with it."

I mean, what more could any spouse want from their husband?! Abraham's *perfect*, right?!

So after *everything* she's been through, *and*, lest we forget, a full 24 years after God promised Abraham that he would have *countless* descendants, it's no

wonder that Sarah would have a pretty cynical outlook on the prospect of having a child at 90 years old.

It's completely understandable...and yet it's utterly dangerous.

Do you know what the opposite of faith is?

It's not doubt; it's fear.

Fear causes us to turn inward, to react defensively, to put up walls.

That's the opposite of faith.

Faith trusts, faith reaches out, faith opens us up.

Faith looks at the world, looks at the future, with hope, a hope trusting, *expecting*, that promises *made* will be promises *kept*.

Do you know what the opposite of hope is?

It's where Sarah's at...it's cynicism.

Cynicism looks at the world with weary resignation.

Every act of violence, every moment of suffering, is met with shrugged shoulders, an exhausted sigh of acceptance...perhaps a wry laugh like Sarah's.

There's no grief, no outrage, no struggle to make things better...because there's no hope... no hope for things to change, no hope for a brighter tomorrow...

This is just the way life is.

I had a run-in with cynicism this week.

And *no*, it *wasn't* with the Twins latest playoff loss to the 'Evil Empire.'

It was with Las Vegas. When I heard about what happened, I didn't get angry...I just shrugged my shoulders.

I wasn't shocked... This was just one more in a long line of tragic events.

I wasn't sad... I just expected that *this* was the kind of news we'd be getting from now on.

And I saw *nothing* to make me believe that we'd *actually* change, *actually* get out of this cycle of violence and suffering and oppression.

Cynicism is a *dangerous* place to be. It's a place without hope...a place, without faith...

When she heard the visitor say, “Sarah shall have a son,” she laughed.

But the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? 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.”

But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh.”

He said, “Oh yes, you *did* laugh.”

Cynicism is a dangerous place to be, but *nothing* is too wonderful, too powerful, for our sassy God to confront, not even *this*!

God calls out Sarah in the midst of her cynicism: “Oh yes, you *did* laugh!”

And wouldn’t you know it, within a year Sarah becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son! They name him Isaac, which is a play on the Hebrew word for... ‘laughter!’

Sarah said, “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.”

God turned Sarah’s cynical laughter into the laughter of pure joy, joy in a promise that has been fulfilled, a faith that has been restored, a future that has hope!

I was perfectly resigned to my cynicism, but wouldn't you know it...God called me out!

Granted, God wasn't as sassy toward me as God was with Sarah, but God called me out nonetheless.

And God did it with what's happened *here* this weekend.

Our Fair Trade Market is a witness to the power of hope.

Just think about all of the obstacles standing in the way of the farmers and artisans who have sent their goods here, their lack of resources, the suffering they have faced, the years of poverty and oppression.

Think about the faith it takes to push through, hoping against hope that this endeavor is *not* just another dead end, but will lead to new life.

Think about the amount of *good* the money that we raise will do for those farmers and artisans, and their entire *communities*! Think about the lives that will be changed because of our partnership with them.

This is how our sassy God walked me back to faith this week.

The truth is, there *is* still suffering in our world, there *is* still fear and oppression and poverty, but that is not *all* there is...there *is* hope, and hope does *not* disappoint us!