June 18, 2023 SARAH LAUGHED

Happy Father's Day!

I read somewhere that humor and laughter are part of human life and there are all sorts of reasons to laugh. Some will laugh out of frustration; unable to do what they want to do, theirs will be a cynical laughter. Others will laugh in denial; unwilling to face what is happening, unable to see positives, theirs will be a sarcastic, hopeless laughter. One of the signs of health in senior adults is the ability to laugh. There are many laughing groups all over the world.

All of us at some time in our life have laughed when some impossible things are told to us.  I remember when I laughed to myself when I was 19, in the year 1967, one day when I was walking from my home to college a car came close to me and stopped. The person inside the car asked me for directions. I gave him directions; he asked me where I was walking. I told him I am on my way to my college which is near to the place where he was going. The man said I will drop you near your college, get into the car, as I sat in the car he asked my name, what is that I am majoring in my college, during our conversation he said I see one day you will go to America, I laughed, he said don’t laugh one day it will happen. Long story short I took so many turns in my life but when I was 47 years old in the year 1994, I was on my way to America. What is impossible in humans, is possible with God.

This Sunday’s theme in the UCC lectionary is “Sarah Laughed”. In our first reading Genesis 18:1-15 we read about Sarah and Abram laughed, when God told Abraham, who was already in his 90’s, that his equally elderly wife Sarah would give birth to a child, Abraham laughed. He laughed in frustration because he had wanted for so long to fulfill his destiny. But it seemed obvious that he was not going to do so. And so, cynicism welled up in Abraham’s heart, and he laughed. You have heard it said, “He who laughs last, laughs best.” Let me expand on that: I may laugh, you may laugh, but God will have the last and best laugh, for God’s purposes will be served.

God said to Abraham, "As for … Sarah … I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. …" 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. Sometimes God’s promises may go against everything we see and feel, and on the surface, they may appear too outlandish to believe. Try to put yourself in the shoes of Sarah. Is it any wonder why Sarah laughed when she heard this?

It was an impossible promise made to Sarah, but what made it even more laughable is that this was the one dream she has always had. The name Sarai means “Barren One”, and how awful it must have been for her to live in a time when a woman’s worth was determined by how many children she could give her husband. And to make it worse, she knew how much Abraham wanted a son, and all of God’s promises to Abraham were dependent upon her having a child, a task she thought she had been unable to do in 90 years.

Now Sarah might have thought it was possible to give somebody a child, but the problem was that she didn’t think He could do it for her. She was too old. She was past the age of child bearing. You know, often it’s not that we doubt that God can do something, it's that we doubt that God can do it for us or through us. You believe that God can forgive, but do you believe God can forgive you? You believe that God can meet the needs of people, but do you believe He can meet your needs? You believe that God pours His spirit out on His people and that they then do amazing things, but do you believe it can happen to you?

Now how did God deal with Sarah’s laughter? First, know that God knew she was laughing. The big mistake that Sarah made was not that she doubted but that she tried to hide it. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to hide your doubts and fears and pretend they are not there. When we are honest with God, that is when He is most able to work with us. Notice how God didn’t scold her for her laughter, He didn’t say that the deal was off.

Now doubt is a lack of faith, you are not more spiritual because you question everything about God. In fact, God wants us to have that childlike trust in Him. But if you do doubt, at least be honest about it and investigate your doubt. If you would like to learn more about how God can make impossible things as easily possible, please join us in our worship on Sunday at 11:00 AM.

Peace!

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ponnuraj

Minister