

Is Anything Too Hard for the LORD?

Advent Midweek #1 – 12/03/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-7 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 13-14a, **“Yahweh said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh... ‘Is anything too hard for the Lord?’”**

Introduction

- ✧ As we go through our Advent Midweek services this year, we will look at and consider three Old Testament examples where God, before He miraculously caused Mary to conceive our Savior, Jesus inside of her womb, had already displayed His power over the biological principles that He put in place when He created us as male and female and then directed us as husbands and wives to “be fruitful and multiply”; three examples of precedent, you might say, where He showed that He alone is the one who ultimately controls whether the procreative process will follow His “normal” process of procreation or not.
- ✧ The example before us tonight involves the patriarch Abraham, who was 75-years-old when God told him to leave his country and his home and go to the land of Canaan.
 - ➔ God promised Abraham that He would make him into a great nation, and that all people would be blessed through him and his descendants (Gen. 12). Still, even while Abraham followed God’s words, he still remained childless – an important principle for couples to remember if/when they struggle to have children today.
 - ➔ So, when God told Abraham to leave, he went with Sarah, his wife, a few relatives, and all of their possessions to this new land in which they were strangers and foreigners.
- ✧ After some time had passed, Abraham began to question God’s promise. And so, Yahweh confirmed His promise to Abraham in Genesis 15, telling him that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.
 - ➔ Genesis 15:6, tells us that “he believed Yahweh, and [God] counted it to him as righteousness.” Abraham trusted what God said, even without any evidence, and through that faith and trust that the Lord always fulfills His promises, Abraham’s gift of being judged as righteous from God was confirmed.

I. Waiting Can be Very Hard for Us, but...

- ✧ Now we come to tonight’s reading. Nearly 25 years have passed. Abraham is 99-years-old, and Sarah, his wife, is still childless – now well past the age of having children herself.
 - ➔ You can imagine how much of a test on their faith those last 24 years must have been. I’m sure the waiting must have seemed endless and futile at times. Understandably, it seems that Sarah has all but given up on the promise.
 - ➔ Yet, even in all of that difficulty Abraham continues to hold on to God’s Word; to still cling to Yahweh’s promise – even when all of the evidence would say that having a child at this point is impossible.
- ✧ This season of Advent that we are in is all about weighing the worldly against the godly evidence while waiting in humble faith. Not only did Abraham wait for the fulfillment of the promise; not only did the people of Israel wait for the coming of the Messiah, but you and I – we now wait for the fulfillment of the Messiah’s salvation on the Last Day; when He will return as promised, don’t we?

- ➔ Yes, even as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' first coming at Christmas, we pause in this season of preparation to meditate on the fact that much of the Christian life is characterized by waiting; looking forward in hope to what is still yet to come.
- ✘ And yes, I know, sometimes the waiting can be discouraging. It can seem so long, that the doubts begin to creep in: "Is Jesus' promise for real?" And it becomes easy for us to turn the focus of our hearts toward other things that give us more immediate results and gratification. When that happens, the promises of Christ often gets pushed to the side and it becomes easier and easier to lose the focus of our faith and that eager anticipation of Christ's return that we once had.
- ➔ As sinners, we all know that waiting patiently doesn't come easily for us. But numerous Psalm verses continue to encourage us, "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage" (Ps. 27:14). And Psalm 130:5 says, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I hope"; followed quickly by verse seven, "O Israel, hope in Yahweh! For with Yahweh there is steadfast love, and with Him is plentiful redemption" (Ps. 130:7).

II. ...**"Is Anything Too Hard for the LORD?"**

- ✘ That steadfast love of God is exactly what we see here in the life of Abraham and Sarah. It is purely according to His grace that Yahweh comes to Abraham to announce that his and Sarah's long wait is just about over!
- ➔ Initially Abraham believes he's simply preparing a meal for a few special guests. But it's in the midst of that meal, in verse 10, that God reveals that it is He Himself who is with Abraham, as He confirms His promise one last time: "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son."
- ➔ In a very similar way, the angel of the Lord also came to Joseph in a dream and announced that his betrothed, Mary, was pregnant, not through infidelity; nor through any "normal" means, but by the almighty power of God Himself: "She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21).
- ➔ The Good News in that announcement was not that the waiting was almost over for one couple, but for all of God's people in every era since God's first promise of a savior was given to Adam and Eve. Yes, the promised Christ was now coming, in the flesh!
- ✘ Sarah and Mary's reactions were a bit different, weren't they? When Sarah heard what Yahweh said, she laughed and said to herself, "After I am worn out, and my lord [Abraham] is old, shall I have (the) pleasure [of having a child]?" (v.12). She was unable to get past the earthly implausibility of the whole concept.
- ➔ But Mary ... she also wondered how she, a virgin, could conceive. But when the angel explained to her that it was by the power of the Holy Spirit, she simply said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38). Mary's was a humble, faith-filled response, not concerned about what was humanly impossible but leaving herself open – in full submission, to what was divinely possible.
- ✘ When Sarah was confronted, she first tried to deny that she had laughed, but Yahweh called her on that lie and then posed this rhetorical question in verse 14, "Is anything too hard for Yahweh?"
- ➔ The obvious answer is, "No, nothing is too hard for the LORD."
- ➔ The angel even confirmed that truth when he said to Mary, "With God nothing will be impossible." And so it was that a 90-year-old Sarah gave birth to a son who would be the direct

ancestor of the Messiah. And then over 2000 years later, the Virgin Mary gave birth to that very Messiah; the Savior of the world; God Himself in the flesh.

III. Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord? Today?

✘ So, what does that have to do with us today, now more 2000 years later – after Jesus' birth? "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

➔ Certainly not; and that includes not only causing miraculous births, but also saving poor, miserable sinners and giving them new life. One time Jesus' disciples were despairing that not even the most exemplary people on earth are good enough to get into heaven. So, they asked in Mark 10:26, "Who then can be saved?" To which Jesus replied, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God" (Mk. 10:27).

➔ People struggle with that truth, big time today – still not wanting to let go of the idea that "I'm a good person deep down inside, so of course I deserve to have a reservation in heaven." But Scripture is very clear: not even the best of us can enter the kingdom of God by our own strength or nature.

➔ And yet, God has made the impossible possible through Jesus. Even we poor miserable sinners are saved by God's holy birth among us. Entirely by His loving sacrifice in our place, God made us alive together with Christ. Nothing is too hard for the Lord, not even saving us. That's God's Word of absolute truth that you and I have been gifted to believe.

✘ Abraham did not reject God's gift of faith so that he believed that nothing is impossible with God. He believed, as our Epistle Reading says in Romans 4:17ff, that God "gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, 'So shall your offspring be.' He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised" (Rom 4:17–21).

➔ Indeed, God brought life out of death. He opened a barren womb and Sarah gave birth to a son. They called him Isaac, which means "he laughs." For where Sarah had laughed before, God now brought laughter and joy to Abraham and Sarah and Isaac by fulfilling His seemingly impossible promise.

IV. The Long-awaited Promised Fulfilled for Us

✘ And now, my dear friends, God has done the same thing for us. He has brought new life out of our spiritually dead souls; giving us joy and laughter through the birth of His only begotten Son. In Him, you and I are set free from sin, fear and death. In Jesus, we have hope – even in the midst of this hopeless, impossible, fallen world. In Him and His cross and resurrection, you and I are those very children; those descendants promised to Abraham over 4000 years ago.

➔ Remember, Abraham was father to Isaac, Isaac was father to Jacob, Jacob became the father of the twelve tribes of Israel, out of Israel came Jesus, the Messiah, and we are now baptized into Christ; making us one with Him by faith.

➔ Yes, Abraham is our spiritual father as Christians. Galatians 3:29 says, "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring." That means that just as Abraham was accounted righteous before God by faith, so we who trust in God's promises are now robed in the righteousness of Jesus.

- ✘ Just think about the impossibly miraculous thing that God has done for you. Just as He did for Sarah and for Mary, God has conceived new and eternal life inside of you by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ➔ Out of the barrenness of your sin and mine, He has created a vibrant and living faith. In the emptiness of our souls, He has caused Jesus to dwell; to fill us with His love and His merciful presence. You could say that He has made your heart and mine His manger. Nothing is too hard for the LORD! Amen.