

Sarah Laughed

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Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

[0 : 00] warm. Doesn't mean I'm going to preach longer. I'm just a little warm. Want me to pass out up here. Thank you, praise team, so much for the beautiful music you gave us today and always. Thank you so much.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Genesis chapter 17 and 18 are where we find ourselves this morning on this great Lord's Day and Mother's Day. It is my custom on these holidays to preach a woman's day message, as I say, a father's day message targeting men and women in general. So women, ladies, to my mothers and sisters and daughters, this one's for you. Brothers, keep your ears open, but ladies, this one's for you. Father, in Jesus' name, as we come to your word now, may it fly like arrows, loving arrows, into the hearts of our mothers, our sisters, and our daughters. Oh, may they hear an encouraging word. May they be strengthened in grace and in knowledge of Jesus. May you speak to them.

May they hear. Give us all ears to hear, but especially the ladies whom we love so much. Bless them. In Christ's name.

Amen. Genesis 17, verses 15 to 19, then 18, 9 through 15. I can see it. And God said to Abraham, as for Sarai, your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

[1 : 53] I will bless her and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her and she shall become nations. Kings of people shall come from her.

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?

Abraham said to God, oh, that Ishmael might live before you. God said, no, but Sarah, your wife, shall bear you a son and you shall call his name Isaac.

I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. Chapter 18, verse 9. They said to him, where is Sarah, your wife?

He said, she's in the tent. The Lord said, I will surely return to you after this time next year. And Sarah, your wife, shall have a son. And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.

[2 : 53] Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself saying, after I'm worn out and my Lord is old, shall I have pleasure?

The Lord said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh and say, shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord?

At the appointed time, I will return to you about this time next year and Sarah shall have a son. But Sarah denied it, saying, I didn't laugh. For she was afraid.

He said, no, but you did laugh. Amen. That is the reading of the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

I tell you, God has a sense of humor. Back in 1975, the Stone Ages, before the internet, before cell phones, before personal computers, we still had music.

[4 : 11] Amen. That's an amen. A popular duo who are probably in the Rock and Hole Hall of Fame by the name of Hall and Oates. Darrell Hall, John Oates.

Somebody remembers them. They had a hit. It was called Sarah Smile. Anybody remember Sarah Smile? Come on, someone. Thank you. Yes. I'm not alone. And I love that song.

I still love that song to the day. I especially loved it when years later, I was blessed to be the godfather to a little girl named Sarah Lewis. If you know Charles Lewis, his sister.

She's getting married this summer now. But when she was little, every time I saw her, I would sing, Would you smile a while for me, Sarah?

Sarah, smile. I sang it. Well, they, they, Hall and Oates did it better. And I would sing that song and she would always, she was a little girl, she would always give me a smile.

[5 : 11] She would always go, she would giggle and smile. And it was so cool. It was so much fun. Her smile was a happy smile. She was thrilled.

This morning, we're going to look at one of the most important people in biblical history. Sarah, the wife of Abraham. And she did more than smile.

She actually laughed. She had been given good news. And it cracked her up. But in her laugh, ladies, we learned something about faith and doubt and even joy.

More, I hope we learned something about God. We learned that he is the God of the impossible. And therefore, his promises are not too good to be true.

I hope you will see that to be true, ladies. Remember where we are in my passage. This is, I'm going to give you a kind of big idea here. Remember, God had promised Abram, before he changed the name to Abraham, he had promised Abram that he would be the father of many people and that through him the nations of the world would be blessed.

[6 : 26] He had promised the old man that from his own body he would have an heir. But surely not through Sarah. They tried the surrogate mother idea.

If you turn back a couple pages, you'll see that in your Bible. But that didn't seem to work out too well. God is now showing specifically how he is going to begin the process of fulfilling his promise to Abraham.

It's through the impossible. It's through the impossible Sarah. So chapter 17 begins with God's pledge to make Abraham a great people.

He enters into a covenant with him, swearing to bless him. And the sign that his family is in this covenant of grace with God is the sign of circumcision.

That's how chapter 17 begins. So now we move down. God comes to speak to Abraham. First of all, God's impossible promise to Sarah through Abraham.

[7 : 41] Notice again, 15, 17, 15, and 16. As for your, as for Sarah, your wife, you should not call her Sarai anymore, but Sarah shall be her name.

I will bless her and moreover, I will give you a son by her. Listen, I will bless her and she shall become nations, kings of people shall come from her.

Now, Sarah, Sarai and Sarah, both names mean princess. But Sarai felt anything like a princess. As Carolyn Custis-Jane puts it in her wonderful book, *Lost Women of the Bible*, she said, she got lost in the very place a woman was supposed to find herself.

Sarah got lost at home. Now, as you know, in that culture, women aspire to be wife and mother. To not become either in that culture was a tragedy.

[8 : 46] You see, unlike today, women were not expected or even given the chance to excel educationally or professionally. Wife and mother was it.

Now, don't get it twisted. Wife and mother are a wonderful gift from God. Wife and mother is enough if you know God. You're never just a wife and mother.

You are walking in God's design if that is who you are. And Sarah was a wife, but now she's well advanced in years.

She's a senior saint. And the idea of bearing biological children is long gone. She feels defeated, even cursed.

She says at one point that the God has withheld children from her. mother. She feels like half a woman. She feels disgraced. She has not provided an heir for her husband.

[9 : 48] Her husband's love and great wealth bring her little joy. She wanted a child. His line will cease and she probably believes it's her fault.

Her life is on kind of a permanent hold. And now she's well advanced in years. Earlier, like I said, she tried to surrogate mother root.

But she and the birth mother, a woman named Hagar, her servant Hagar, are having a hard time getting along. She treated her so rough, Sarah treated her so rough that her servant Hagar had fled.

but God met her and sent her back with a promise for her own son, a young man named Ishmael. But what about Sarah? What about Sarah?

I mean, she's still here. She's got this servant who's given a son to her husband and yet it's not bringing her the joy she thought it would.

[10:52] What about Sarah? Maybe she's saying, what about me? Have you ever felt that way ladies? What about me?

Your friends and family members seem to be moving on with their lives. Degrees, husbands, children, careers, homes, life. But you feel stuck.

You're stuck in this niche, this rut. Whatever it is, you feel stuck. And I want to tell you if that's you, Sarah's your mother.

But God has not forgotten you. His plan for all of his daughters is different somewhat, though the end will be the same. You are destined for glory, for fullness, for ultimate satisfaction, and ultimate happiness.

You are destined for perfection in Jesus. Jesus. But right now, you only got a taste. And sometimes even a taste seems like a crumb.

[12:01] We're told in Scripture to taste and see that the Lord is good. And you're wondering if you can have a bigger bite. God. But here's the thing.

In the midst of Sarah's pain, and actually into Sarah's pain, God speaks. Don't miss it. He's speaking to her pain and in her pain.

You see, ladies, always be listening for God's voice, especially in his word. Never stop listening for the voice of God.

Never turn your ears off, as it were, because of the rut you may be in. Never stop listening for Jesus because he is the word made flesh.

And he's come to speak to you in the way that you can hear. In Sarah's case, this word is given to her husband regarding her. God gives, it may come through a friend, it may come through a pastor, it may come through somebody in your family.

[13:10] However it comes, God is speaking. And God gives an impossible promise to her. And the answer to that promise is no way.

even Abraham fell on his face before God and laughed. Can you imagine that? He's worshipping as it were. When he falls on his face it's not like we were, ha ha ha.

He's falling down before the Lord. And yet he's laughing. Isn't that beautiful? He's laughing in the presence of God. However, he's laughing because it sounds so crazy.

He's like we're too old to be having babies. His laughter was it pure unbelief?

I think so because in verse 18 to 17 he offers God an alternate plan. He said I heard what you're saying but I got a better idea. Oh that Ishmael.

[14:09] What about so he's trying to give God plan B. here's the thing ladies God made a promise. He's so serious about it that he tells Abraham to name the boy to be born to Sarah Isaac which of course means laughter.

You know a promise is only as good as the one making it. Maybe ladies you've had people make promises to you and it didn't produce.

Can you think of a time maybe even recently when that happened? Sometimes they didn't have the money to produce. Sometimes they didn't have the time to hold their end up.

Sometimes they didn't have the strength of character or whatever to keep their promise but they failed you. But God does not suffer from such limitations.

He made a promise. Hear the word of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 1.20 For all the promises of God find their yes in him. That's Jesus. That is why it is through him that we utter our amen to God for his glory.

[15:22] All the promises of God ladies are yes in Jesus to you. The question you must ask yourself is this. Are you holding on to a promise rightly understood from God's word or are you holding on to your own wish or desire to fulfill you?

The promises of God are fulfilling your wishes or desires. 50-50. Promise.

Second thing God's promises seem too good to be true. I mean think about it. I mean they do. Again chapter 17 verse 17 Abraham laughs.

Shall Sarah who is 90 years old bear a child? Too good to be true. Chapter 18 verse 12. Now so Sarah laughed to herself saying after I'm worn out and my Lord is old shall I have pleasure.

Both of the great saints of God are finding the promise of God to be too good to be true. They're both in their 90s and now God is telling Sarah to start taking prenatal vitamins.

[16:51] He's telling Abe to get the nursery ready. I remember when my first daughter was about to be born we had a nursery we live in New Jersey had a nursery I went in that room I painted pink.

I painted the room pink. We didn't know we were having a girl did we? No we didn't know. I had this wonderful little window seat and I painted that white.

I don't remember. I know I painted the room. That's what you do when you're a dad. You get excited and you start fixing up stuff. Ladies I know you probably do more of it than we do but we're trying to get the room ready.

So Abraham was being told get the nursery ready bro. The stork is coming. She couldn't conceive when she was young but now she's going to.

Oh really? Too good to be true. I don't blame her for laughing. I don't blame Abraham for laughing. I mean Sarah wanted to fall on her face too and laugh but she couldn't.

[18:01] When we use the expression something sounds too good to be true what that really means is it's not true. So don't believe it.

Don't believe it. Don't be a sucker. Don't get taken. God was giving Sarah a promise concerning her place in God's plan of salvation for the very world.

One of her descendants would be the Christ would be the Christ. The one to whom all the nations would become spiritual children of Abraham thus fulfilling God's promise to him.

God's plan for God's plan for her. But it was imperative that she give birth to a child. But she didn't know that much.

She didn't realize it. She couldn't believe God's plan for her. Again, Carolyn Custis James, I commend this book to you ladies.

[19:07] Sarah was so defeated by her circumstances, she had forgotten God. He brought her to the end of her hopes to bring her to himself. But right now she's laughing.

Ladies, God has made great promises to you in Jesus. Do these promises seem too good to be true to you? Do you believe, let's take the big one, do you believe that all of your sins, no matter what they are, past, present, and future are forgiven?

God will never hold your sins against you. So are you holding on to what you've done? Are you holding it over your own head?

Maybe not forgiving yourself? Maybe you had an abortion or supported a friend in getting one. maybe you hurt someone very badly.

Maybe you stole something. Maybe you cheated on a boyfriend or worse, your spouse. Maybe you gossip and someone really got hurt because you spread a rumor.

[20:29] Hear the promise of God. Psalm 103, 10 and 12. He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities.

As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. What about 1 John 1 9? If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just.

Listen, it's about him. He is faithful and just. to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Ladies, these verses are too good to be true if you don't believe in Jesus.

If you believe in Jesus, they are really good to be true. They're really good. When you trust in Jesus and what he has done on the cross and the empty tomb, paying for your sins, his work over you, he says when it comes to that, it's finished.

But yet, he's still not done with your life. There's nothing for you to do, ladies, to walk in the forgiveness and cleansing of Jesus other than to believe it.

[21:46] He doesn't ask you to forgive yourself. Ladies, if you're not forgiving yourself, you are saying his work was not good enough. Don't focus on you.

Focus on his forgiving work because forgiveness to be true biblical forgiveness has to come outside of you.

It's a gift of grace that's given to you. You're not asked to give grace to yourself. You're asked to receive the grace from God.

Walk in that forgiveness. The devil loves to hold up your past and wave it in front of you. And by the way, your past could be yesterday and remind you of what you did and said and who was hurt.

Never get a hard heart about people you've hurt, but don't let the devil torment you. Tell him to get to step in because you have a father, a heavenly father.

[23:01] As Psalm 103 verse 13 says, as a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

Saras, Saras, it's true. It's not too good to be true. is simply true. You're a new creation.

You're forgiven. You're cleansed forever. The last thing I want you to notice here is God's relentless pursuit of Sarah.

Remember where we've been. We've looked at God's impossible promise to Sarah. We've looked at God's promise seems too good to be true. But I want you to notice this last thing, God's relentless pursuit of Sarah.

And this is in chapter 18, 19, 9 through 15. It's beautiful how God pursues us even in the midst of our unbelief.

[24 : 12] First notice in verse 9, God asks for Sarah. I mean, did you catch it? He's talking to, remember, God is, the first verses there, he, God appears to, he comes to meet with Abraham.

He takes on a form of a Bedouin traveler. Three of them. One of them we know to be God, the other two are angelic beings. They're going to be sent to Sodom and Gomorrah to rescue Lot, Abraham's nephew, out of Sodom before it's destroyed.

God appears in what we call a theophany. He appears as a, you know, a human being in this case. And he comes and he's eating and meeting.

I can't have time to deal with all of that, but man, that eating thing was really significant. But he's sitting with them and so he looks at Abraham. Abraham's got food ready, goat kill, whatever, coming out.

They're ready to grub. And he says, by the way, where is Sarah? Where is Sarah? Where is Sarah? God knew that like a good wife, she was eavesdropping on the conversation.

[25 : 22] Sarah's in the tent and she's got her, she's got the tent flap open just a little bit, got her ear and eye up to it and she's listening and watching as best she can. Because after all, ladies, come on, she couldn't trust Abraham to tell her everything.

He might not even, he's old. He probably would get the message wrong. So she had to back him up, you know, and my wife, I'm on the phone and she's listening, she's backing me up.

I understand, I know exactly what this means. But listen, I'm sure when God said her name, she almost fell through the tent.

She almost gave herself away. When God said, where is Sarah? Oh my goodness, her ears perked up. Ladies, ladies, stay with me here. God pursues you by name.

When Jesus rose from the dead, you remember? And Mary Magdalene thought he was the gardener. She couldn't, for some reason, she was kept from recognizing who he was.

[26 : 29] And she says to him, thinking he's the gardener, tell me where you took his body so I can come and get him. It is only when Jesus said, Mary, boom, that her eyes were opened and she realized it was Jesus.

God speaks your name. Mothers and sisters and daughters, God is pursuing you by name, meaning he knows you, he knows your circumstances, he knows your joys, he knows your sorrows, he knows your longings, and he knows your pain intimately.

He knew exactly what Sarah was doing and why she was doing it. Moses, the writer of Genesis, explains the biological situation in verse 11.

And he does it with gusto. Now, Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. the way of women had ceased to be with Sarah.

Sarah laughs to herself, after I am worn out and my Lord is old, shall I have pleasure? Whoa. She's laughing to herself, meaning she's snickering.

[27 : 53] But then she's thinking, here's the one, here's the thing, God calls out Sarah for laughing in verse 13. Sarah's like, hold it, my man is old.

I'm not having that monthly thing. And the whole pleasure part, she's saying, there's no more whoopee going on. Amen.

So why does God call Sarah out and not Abraham? Remember, he didn't call Abraham out for laughing, but he called Sarah out for laughing.

Listen, y'all, listen, ladies, he's pursuing her heart. He is coming, he's coming for her. He is particularly coming for this woman. He doesn't want Sarah to just go along with the plan, just meekly follow her husband.

He wants Sarah to follow him, to believe in him herself. You see, to God, Sarah is much more than Abraham's wife or even the future mother of Isaac.

[29 : 04] Sarah is his beloved daughter. Ladies, you are much more to God than what you can produce, whether that's biologically or professionally, educationally, artistically.

You are much more to God than what you can produce. You bear his image and more, as a follower of Jesus, you bear the image of his son.

You've been, like I said, you've been forgiven. You've been welcomed into God's family through his great kindness of love. And listen, you have a benefits package.

that's out of this world. Can I read you your benefits package? I think I did this before, but so what? Psalm 103. Here's your benefits package, ladies.

Hold on to your seats. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is with me. Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

[30 : 08] Here's the package. Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who, listen, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.

Here it goes, who satisfies you with good so that your youth, come on ladies, your youth is renewed like the eagles. Come on, senior mothers, is your youth being renewed like the eagles because you trust in Jesus?

He ain't done with you. and nothing, listen, that's better than any Fortune 500 company anywhere. And nothing can separate you from this love.

Nothing, ladies. His love for you is everything. Do you hear me? Everything. Everything. You may not have anything else, but if you have the love of God in Christ Jesus, you have everything.

Sarah was part of God's family, a true daughter, not an in-law, born to bear God's image, born to advance his cause. Her identity as a woman was anchored to God.

[31 : 31] Nothing could ever take that away from her. She was encircled in his love every bit as much as Abraham. Only she was distracted by her barrenness.

She couldn't see how much she mattered to God. Gustus James again. But ladies, ultimately, the scenario is not about Sarah.

It's not even ultimately about Abraham. This scenario is ultimately about God. 1814. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

He said, Sarah, in a year, I'm going to come back, you're going to have a child. Is anything too hard for the Lord? That's what this is about. God wants Sarah and Abraham to see him as he is.

It is striking that the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham to bless the world through him is fulfilled in a teenage girl who would be told she's going to have a baby though she's a virgin.

[32 : 46] and that her aunt would be another Sarah. Elizabeth would be another Sarah. Way past the age of childbearing.

But they're both being told God would do something that's impossible. This is how God would fulfill the promise. He would come to a teenage girl and an aged aunt to tell them God hasn't forgotten you.

I love what the angel Gabriel says about the child to be born to the teenage girl named Mary. She said he said that the child he will be great and be called the son of the most high.

She would say but how is it possible? How is it? I'm a virgin. And in Luke 1 37 he would say almost similar words to what's being told to Sarah. For nothing will be impossible with God.

Nothing will be impossible with God. Whatever good God has determined to do for you whatever promise in his word rightly understood that he's giving you ladies listen I don't care how good it sounds how impossible it sounds it's true he is he means for you to rest in his truth and he will provide for you.

[34 : 13] Jesus rose from the dead for you is anything too hard for God? Sarah was being called to trust God before she had gone through decades of feeling less than that wasn't easy oh gosh and I don't blame her for feeling the way she felt no one should but now at the end of her life she's being told she really is a princess her name means princess and now she's being told by God you really are a princess because God is her father ladies believe it or not you're princesses the king king of the universe is your father and so in Genesis 21 6

Sarah will say God has made laughter for me when Isaac is born God has made laughter for me everyone who hears will laugh over me when you hold on to the promises of God my dear sisters my mothers and my daughters we will laugh with you as God fulfills them in your life strikingly Sarah is mentioned again several times she's mentioned again in Hebrews 11 11 you know what Hebrews 11 11 says about Sarah by faith Sarah herself received power to conceive by faith Sarah herself received power to conceive even when she was past the age since she considered him faithful who had promised did you Genesis what it means what that means is when God called her out when

God said yes you did laugh that confrontation that pursuit of her engendered faith in her as she began to trust him she began to believe that he would actually do it wow she laughed but when God pursued her she smiled Sarah smiled because she knew she could trust him he loved her enough to pursue her God has pursued you all the way to the 21st century he will not stop pursuing you ladies he wants your heart he wants you to trust him come what may faith he wants you to trust his promises it's striking I'm just I end with this it's striking that another time the word impossible is used with God it's also in Hebrews 11 verse 6 without faith it is impossible to please him for whoever would draw near to

God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him without faith without trust it's impossible you're going to miss something God could have said in order to please me you must perfectly obey me you must give all you have away you must give your life in my cause you must give me your children he could have said all of that but he didn't all he says ladies trust me draw near and trust me the basis of any healthy relationship trust so will you trust him will you trust the one who pursued you all the way to the cross and to the empty tomb will you trust him sarahs princesses will you trust him father oh father bless our mothers our sisters and our daughters who hear this word please bless them and draw them near and strengthen their faith and strengthen their lives for Jesus sake amen or but to them that they have