

Yesterday afternoon a friend of mine called me out of the blue. I was concerned because he rarely calls me. If he does it is generally bad news. So I quickly answered the phone and asked him what was wrong.

He told me that nothing was wrong. He just decided that if he was going to be within fifty miles of me he would call. My friend lives in one of the northern suburbs of Kansas City, so I asked him where he was. Proudly he said Davenport. I didn't know how to break it to him that Madrid is not fifty miles from Davenport.

He told me that he would be driving through Des Moines today, and wanted to get breakfast. I asked him if he remembered what I did now and that I probably wouldn't be able to make it to breakfast. He said that it was OK and I could bring all of you as long as I was paying.

Chad then did something that surprised me. He asked me what scripture I was going to be preaching today. And I told him. We talked about Abraham and Sarah having Isaac much later in life. And he laughed and asked if I was talking about them since I was so old when we had Wednesday. I laughed and hung up on him.

I really didn't hang up on him. But, we did talk about getting older and how some things seem so hard to do anymore while others seem quite easy. He said that it had been hard for him to talk to me because he had always been a sinner. And I reminded him that I was with him on more than one occasion when we might not have made the best decision. But, it's never too late to make changes.

A number of people didn't start what they are known for until much later in life. Julia Child started culinary school in her fifties. Laura Ingalls Wilder was in her sixties when she published Little House on the Prairie. And Colonel Sanders started his first KFC when he was sixty. I couldn't imagine trying to launch a brand today as I approach fifty let alone trying to do it at sixty.

But here Abraham and Sarah are having a baby when they are 100 and 90 respectively. Having had a baby at 45, I can honestly say that you would be crazy to have a child anytime after 50, let alone that late in life if it is even possible.

But that is really the point isn't it? How can this be possible? So many times, we think that we can't do something for various reasons, we are too old; we aren't strong enough; we don't have the resources. And yet we still find a way.

In Mark 10:27 we are reminded that even though some things are impossible through man, nothing is impossible through God. And that is what today's scripture is also telling us. At this point in our reading of Genesis, we've seen God come to Abraham in various visions. And at each point Abraham's faith has wavered a little, even though God has told him that He will protect Abraham, his family, and his descendants.

Eventually Abraham laughs at God for saying this in his vision. God has promised Abraham that his descendants will have the land from the Nile to the Euphrates, but Abraham has no children. But God has promised him that Sarah will bear him a son, but he is in his 70's and she is in her 60's, so that seems unlikely.

In another vision, God told Abraham to change his name from Abram to Abraham. In most of the Old Testament stories, the names not only depict specific people, but they also tell a story. Abram in Hebrew means ancestor, and Abraham means ancestor of many. So, God continues driving that Abraham will be the father of many even though Sarah has not given him a son.

God promises Abraham that he will fulfill the covenant between him and Abraham. Sarah will bear a child and his ancestors will be protected and have all the land. Also all of the descendants of Ishmael, and all other slaves and followers of Abraham will be protected as long as they believe and share in the covenant as well.

So Abraham does as he is told, even though Sarah still has not had a child. He continues to lead a righteous life and accepts his role in the covenant. God sees this when he appears to Abraham as three travelers. This is the first actual time that God appeared to Abraham in the flesh and not a vision.

As the travelers, Abraham and Sarah showed great hospitality toward the strangers. They behaved as they would have for anyone else that visited their door. They shared and expressed their covenant with God and he was pleased. He was so pleased that he told them that he would return in a year's time and Sarah would give birth to a son.

Sarah was in the tent and overheard the discussion and laughed. And why wouldn't she laugh? She was in her late 80's and was going to have a child. The idea would seem ridiculous. But God overheard her laugh and told her that it would be so and they would name the boy Isaac.

Isaac if you didn't know is Hebrew for God's laughter. At this point, both Abraham and Sarah have laughed at God when he told them that they will still have a son. But, he blessed them. And the next year, Isaac was born. He rewarded them for all that they have done and the lives they had led.

Abraham and Sarah were promised time and time again that they would have a son. And eventually it came to a point, where it seemed that they would never have a son. The probabilities were so far stretched that it would be improbable. But, God still granted them his promise.

Even though they were older, they never lost their faith. And God rewarded them. He reminds us that no matter what, through him all things are possible. When we feel too tired, or too old, or without resources, our faith in him can carry us through. He will be there and guide us, protect us, and help us. Our faith will bring forth greatness.

Long before the change of name,
before the first signs of new life
showed the beginnings of promises fulfilled,
You asked Abram to make his home among foreigners,
and share the blessing that was to come.

And now, O God, you ask the same faith of us:
The faith to count ourselves among the least,
to find our place alongside the poor and broken;
The faith to trust in your mercy and your promises,
and to share what we have received;
The faith to wait expectantly for your reign of justice and equity,
together with those who most need its gifts.

Teach us to be children of Abram, sharers of the blessings we enjoy:
The blessing of plenty shared with those who have need,
The blessing of healing shared with those who are sick and wounded,
The blessing of joy shared with those who celebrate
and of tears shared with those who grieve,
The blessing of friendship shared with those who are excluded,
and of solidarity with those who fight injustice,
The blessing of peace shared with those in conflict,
and of confrontation shared with those who bring harm;
And in some small way, may our faith and our sharing,
help to bring your promises into being
in our world.

Amen.