

“God Has Made Laughter for Us”
Genesis 18:1-15 – April 3, 2016

INTRO: Our story today is about a woman’s laughter. “She is an old woman, and after a lifetime in the desert, her face is cracked and rutted like a six-month drought. She hunches her shoulders around her ears and starts to shake. She squinnies her eyes shut, and her laughter is all China teeth and wheeze and tears running down as she rocks back and forth in her kitchen chair. She is laughing because she is pushing ninety-one hard and has just been told she is going to have a baby. She can’t control herself, and her husband can’t control himself either. He keeps a straight face a few seconds longer than she does, but he ends up by cracking up too. The old woman’s name is Sarah, and the old man’s name is Abraham. They are laughing at the idea of a baby’s being born in the geriatric ward and Medicare’s picking up the tab. They are laughing because if by some crazy chance it should just happen to come true, then they would really have something to laugh about.” (Frederick Buechner)

A man awoke one morning to find a puddle of water in the middle of his king-size water bed. In order to fix the puncture, he emptied the water out of the mattress, rolled the thing outside and filled it with more water so he could locate the leak more easily. The enormous bag of water was impossible to control and it began to roll down the hill in front of his house. He tried to hold it back, but it headed downhill and landed in a clump of bushes, which poked the mattress full of holes. Disgusted, he threw out the water bed frame and all, and moved a standard mattress into his room. The next morning he awoke, only to find a puddle of water in the middle of his brand new bed. It seems, the real problem all along, was a leaky drain in the upstairs bathroom. And, yes, there are many responses we could have to that particular situation, and many words we might say, but I think a great response would be to just laugh.

We each have times, when laughter eases the tension, gives us an opportunity to forgive what might be our ineptness, and is something we can share with each other. Laughing about our real life circumstances, is often the most appropriate thing to do.

I think it was an appropriate response from Sarah. These messengers from God, appear and tell Abraham they will return to visit them in nine months, and by then a son will be born. Sarah overhearing the conversation may have thought, “Yeah, right.” After hoping for a child all these years, she’s way past her child-bearing years. She’s too old, her husband’s too old, and she’s worn out from life already. The only response that came to her was to laugh—this was too ridiculous, too far out to even believe.

“Far from getting angry at them for laughing, God told them that when the baby was born, they were to name him Isaac—Hebrew for laughter. God not only tolerated their laughter, but blessed it, and in a sense joined in, which makes it a very special laughter indeed.” (Frederick Buechner)

After the birth of Isaac, Sarah said, “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.” (Gen. 21: 6)

God brings laughter into our lives too—a wonderful gift, which in fact has been proven to give us fine benefits. Our blood vessels can widen 50 % when we’re laughing, compared to when we’re stressed. To get that same heart-healthy benefit, we’d have to either get a prescription for cholesterol-lowering drugs or bank up to 10 full minutes of cardio for every minute of laughter. Laughter increases gamma brain waves, the same ones activated during meditation. They make you feel focused and alert but also calm. And if we laughed for 15 minutes straight, we’d burn off about one sugar-free fudge pop. (*Self*, 10/14)

So, this afternoon, maybe you can enjoy that sugar-free fudge pop, because we’re going to spend some time sharing jokes. Just relax and feel free to laugh, and experience one of God’s good gifts to us.

A kindergarten teacher gave her class a "show and tell" assignment of bringing something to represent their religion. The first child got in front of the class and said, "My name is Benjamin and I am Jewish and this is a Menorah." The second child stood up and said, "My name is Mary. I'm Catholic and this is a Crucifix." The third child stood up and said, "My name is Tommy. I'm Presbyterian and this is a coffee cup." The fourth child stood up and said, "My name is Jenny. I'm a United Methodist and this is a casserole."

What's the difference between Baptists and Presbyterians? Baptists don't wave to each other in the liquor store.

Why don't Amish people water ski? The horses would drown.

A girl goes to a Catholic church for the first time. She sees the priest walk down the aisle in his robe, swinging the pot of incense. She whispers to her grandmother, "I like his dress, but does he know his purse is on fire?"

An elderly woman died last month. Having never married, she requested no male pallbearers. In her handwritten instructions for her memorial service, she wrote, "They wouldn't take me out while I was alive, I don't want them to take me out when I'm dead."

God decided to see how things were going on earth, so God sent down an angel. The angel came back and reported: "It's not good. People are 95% bad and only 5% good." God decided to send an email to the 5% that were good. (to the congregation): You know what the email said? Oh you didn't get the e-mail either?

A man walks into the doctor's office with a cucumber in his nose, a carrot in one ear, and a banana in the other. He says, "Doctor, what's the matter with me?" The doctor says, "You aren't eating properly."

Did you hear that NASA launched some cattle into space? It was the herd shot 'round the world.

A cat & a mouse die & go to heaven. A day later, God sees the mouse & asks, "How's it going?" "Great," says the mouse, "but could I get a pair of roller skates?" God says, "Okay." A few days later, God sees the cat. "How's it going?" "Wonderful! I never dreamed there would be meals on wheels."

Three old guys are sitting in the lobby at their retirement home. One of them asks, "When people look at you in your casket, what would you like to hear them say?" First guy says, "I'd like to hear them say that I was a great doctor and a great family man." Second guy: "I'd like to hear them say, he was a fine school teacher, who made a difference in the lives of many children." Third guy, "I'd like to hear them say, 'Look! He's moving!'"

How many choir directors does it take to change a light bulb? No one knows. Who watches the director?

How can you tell if a singer is at your door? They can't find the key and they never know when to come in.

Why did the Arizona mapmaker get fired? He had no sense of Yuma.

A minister calls in sick to church on a Sunday morning, then goes to play golf. He comes home looking sad. His wife asks, "Honey, was it a bad game?" He says, "I got a hole-in-one. But I can't tell anyone!"

It's a terrible, winter night - blizzard, snow, ice. The old guy is having a heart attack at home. He says to his wife, "Call the priest to come over." She says, "But, John, we're Presbyterian." He says, "I know, but I don't want my pastor to have to come out in this weather."

A preacher goes for a walk in the woods on his day off. A bear comes out of the woods straight at him. The preacher looks to heaven and cries, "Lord, please make this bear a Christian!" The bear skids to a halt, falls on its knees, clasps its paws together, and says, "Lord, thank you for the food I am about to receive."

A Sunday School teacher quizzed her class if they knew what Easter was all about. One child said that Easter was when daddy brought a green tree into the house and put presents under it. "No", the teacher replied, "that is Christmas." Another student said that Easter was when grandma cooked a big turkey and everybody at the table gave thanks for what they had. "No," the teacher replied, "that is Thanksgiving. After much thought, a third student said that Easter was when a king got mad at a man who was saying bad things about the king. So the king had him killed and put in a cave with a big rock in front of it. Three days later the man came out of the cave and if he would see his shadow there would be 6 more weeks of winter."

What do you get when you cross a dyslexic, an insomniac, and an agnostic? Someone who lays awake at night wondering if there is a dog.

What is the warmest place in any room? The corner. It's always 90 degrees. (submitted by a math teacher in our congregation)

Why didn't Noah have any apples on the Ark? He only took pairs, pears.

A man has a pet duck. The duck is sick, unresponsive. The man takes the duck to the vet. The vet says he looks dead and the man refuses to accept the verdict. He insists that the vet do more testing . So the vet calls his cat. The cat jumps up on the examining table, looks the duck over, shakes his head and jumps down. The vet then calls his Labrador retriever. The dog jumps up, looks, sniffs, shakes his head and jumps down. The vet says "Sorry, it's confirmed, your duck is dead". The man finally is convinced and says, "OK, what do I owe you?" The vet says \$250.00. WHAT? \$250.00 just to tell me that my duck is dead? To which the vet says "No my fee is only \$50.00, the rest is for the cat scan and the lab report".

A woman hurried to the pharmacy to get medication, got back to her car and found that she had locked her keys inside. She found an old rusty coat hanger left on the ground, looked at it and said, "I don't know how to use this." Then she bowed her head and asked God to send her some help. Instantly, a beat-up old motorcycle pulled up, driven by a bearded man who was wearing an old biker skull rag. He got off of his cycle and asked if he could help. She said: "Yes, my daughter is sick. I've locked my keys in my car. I have to get home. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?" He said, "Sure." He walked over to the car, and in less than a minute the car was open. She hugged the man and through tears said, "Thank You, God, for sending me such a very nice man." The man heard her little prayer and replied, "Lady, I am NOT a nice man. I got out of prison yesterday; I did time for car theft." The woman hugged the man again, sobbing, "Thank you, God! You even sent me a professional!"

--Sue Burwell