

All-Embracing God,

Teach us to follow in the footsteps of our ancestor Abraham, to recognize You when you draw near.

Bring us joy, and make us laugh like you did our ancestor Sarah when she heard of the miracle you had promised her

and

Inspire us as to tell the great story of Your love for all Your people, a story that began with Your covenant with Abraham and Sarah and was brought into fulfilment by the death and resurrection of Your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

I always appreciate when we get given such **good** stories in our readings.

The book of Genesis, the first book of the Torah, the Old Testament, and the Bible, is an incredible narrative of the creation of the world, the early history of humankind, and the beginning of the history of Israel being God's people through God's servant, Abraham.

Abraham is the main figure in this latter part of Genesis. He is known as the patriarch of the Israelites, due to the covenant, or promise, that God made with him that he would have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky.

And, because we have been grafted onto Israel by grace, he's our patriarch as well, and we help to fulfil another part of that covenant, that all the peoples on earth will be blessed through him.

In today's reading from Genesis, we join Abraham and his wife Sarah by the oaks of Mamre, where, when sitting at the entrance of his tent, he looked up and saw three men standing nearby.

Instead of being confused as to why there are three strangers in their encampment, or preparing to fight these three men if they started to cause trouble, or even just asking them "Why are you here?", **Abraham ran to meet them and bowed down to the ground.**

Somehow, Abraham is able to see the face of God within these three men.

After showing respect for His Lord, he offers for the three men to wash their feet, rest under the tree, eat some bread, and refresh themselves.

Through these four offers of bread, water, rest, and refreshment, Abraham offers God hospitality.

With the help of his unnamed servant, and his wife Sarah, Abraham is able to provide for and serve them a meal of bread, meat, and cheese which they enjoy under the shade of a tree.

As the story unfolds, we learn that this was not just a friendly visit where God was stopping by to check in on His servant Abraham, but instead, God is using these three visitors to remind them of God's promise for them, that when they return in due season, Sarah will have a son.

Sarah, well beyond menopause at a youthful 99 years old, laughs audibly and asks "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?", to which God replies "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?" and He reiterates that, the next time he returns, that Sarah will have a son.

And in the reading we do hear of the next time that Sarah laughed - when she conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age. She proclaims the miracle that she has been a part of, crying out "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."

The most incredible thing is that **none of this would have even happened** if Abraham didn't trust in God and what God promised He would do for him and his family.

He would not have encountered God outside his tent in Mamre, and be able to offer Him hospitality.

He would not have **finally** had a child with his elderly wife Sarah, something which they prayed for for decades.

He would not have descendants as innumerable as the stars in the sky.

The entire history of our salvation hinged on Abraham and Sarah's FIAT, their YES to the will of God for them in their lives - even though it felt impossible for them to have a child in their own age.

The entire history of our salvation hinged on Mary's YES to the will of God for her in her life - even though it felt impossible for her to conceive and bear a child.

The entire history of our salvation hinged on Jesus' YES to the will of God for Him in His life - even though it felt impossible to believe that He would be resurrected after His death on the cross.

Do we have the same courage to give our YES to God when He promises us what we think might be impossible?

The Bible is full of stories, from Abraham and Sarah's, to Mary's and to Jesus', that seem impossible.

But time and time again, story after story, it reminds us that **with God, all things are possible.**

With God, virgins and post-menopausal women conceive, bear, and deliver children.

With God, the disciples were given the power to cast out unclean spirits and cure every disease and every sickness.

With God, we are justified by faith, through the death of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as Paul says, if God is for us, who or what can be against us?

When the impossible is made possible, we can have faith that the Spirit will continue to move; in our hearts, in this place, and in the church.

And so my friends, with confidence in our faith and in our God, are we ready?

Are we ready to welcome God into our midst?

Are we ready for God to change our lives for the better, even if what He promises feels impossible?

Are we ready to say YES?