

Will I Ever Laugh Again?
Genesis 17:1-2, 15-21, Genesis 18:9-15, 21:1-7
Mark 10:13-16

I. Introduction – more than we can do in one morning.

Graduates

Mother's Day – a difficult day for many. Yes, mothers have passed away.

Grief. Many-most celebrate the significance of their mothers and the mothers of their children, honor them, take them out for dinner and pamper them. Then I begin to get uneasy – do we honor them the other 364 days of the year. And what about the women who can't be mothers, long to be married and aren't, who have been hurt by their mothers ... , Men, I am going to ask you today to stand --- clap. Symbol of honoring all the women in our lives and in our community. Women of this congregation, young old, mothers or not, we honor you.

Pentecost – birthday of the church, celebrate the giving of the HS.

Giving of the HS was not about tongue speaking – tongues that day were so that every one could understand the gospel in their own vernacular.

Important – everybody did understand the same language – Koine Greek.

But on this day, God in his grace sent his spirit and those present heard the gospel in their own vernacular. Results – 2. 3000 individuals saved.

Those individuals bonded together in fellowship – the church. We live in an age when many speak poorly of the church – sorry, God created it through the HS. He made the church. Don't pray the Lord's Prayer if you don't like the church ... _____father. (our)

Then, we began this sermon series – things I would like to preach but didn't have time...that's where I am going to go this day.

II. Jokes ---

Did you hear about the elderly woman who when she went home from church found a burglar in her home. She yelled Stop. Acts 2:38. (Repent and be baptized in the name of the LJC so that your sins might be forgiven.) The burglar froze and she calmly called 911 and the police came and arrested the burglar. Why did you freeze when she yelled scripture: "Scripture – I thought she said she had an ax and 2 - 38's.

keying off of Mother's day, and David Letterman, 10 things a mother doesn't want to hear.

10. I'm moving out – well, maybe some days.

9. The dog doesn't like dressing in your clothes

8. I painted your shoes pretty, huh mommy?

7. Has anyone seen my earthworms

6. What's it cost to fix a window

5. But Dad says that word....

4. The principal called

3. Does grape juice leave a stain?

2. Your lipstick works better than crayons
1. I swallowed a penny.

Dana Chau in a sermon listed the things his mother had taught him.

Religion: You had better pray the pizza comes out of the carpet.

Logic: Because I said so.

Foresight: Be sure you wear clean underwear in case you're in an accident.

Stamina: You'll sit there until your food is all gone.

Weather: Looks like a tornado went through your room.

Circle of life: I brought you into this world, and I can take you out.

Behavior modification: Stop acting like your father.

Martin Lloyd Jones was a famous Welsh preacher of the 20th century. He once said that the pulpit was not a place for humor. It was a battle between heaven and hell for the souls of those listening. Not a place for humor. He wouldn't approve of this morning...but then again he quit preaching when he was preaching through Romans and got to Romans 14:17 – for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. He said: “I don't know what joy in the Holy Spirit means.”

III. So why have we taken this route?

- A. So impressed with the piece of art in the narthex – Laughing Jesus. There should be Joy in this place. Your art reflects that.

Mark 10:13-16 They were bringing children to him, that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them; “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

Children do not come to grumps – nor to people who have a stoic personality. I see – don't you – a joyful Jesus embracing these kids, taking them in his lap, laughing with and over them.

We are children of a heavenly father. Children of Jesus. The day will come when he will say to his children...well done you good and faithful servant ... Come, enter the kingdom prepared for you.

Or will it be stoic – stern?

A member said to me, “We don't laugh anymore. It's hard.” Yes life can be hard – but this is place to rejoice, to laugh, to know the burden of sin and guilt is gone in Jesus. The battle is not being waged here – the battle between heaven and hell – it was waged

2000 years ago on a cross of Calvary. Christ defeated evil, Satan, and hell for all who believe in him. Ha ha! We can laugh – its time to laugh again.

- B. There is a clear story of laughter in scripture – laughter at God and then laughter in God. (well maybe, if you are 90 and a woman you might not laugh – maybe 100 year old guys don't laugh at this story either.)

Genesis 18:9-15

Genesis 21:1-7

1. Promise to Abraham and Sarah – a child, descendants, nations, like the sands of the sea. They left Iraq with that promise – across the desert, into Egypt, back to Palestine.

Can you imagine? Years of relationships to make a child to fulfill the promise and nothing happens. Abraham and Sarah gave up. Sarah gave her maid Hagar to Abraham and Ishmael was born – but it wasn't their child. Sarah grew jealous. The promise seemed empty.

2. But three – angels – one identified as the Lord, showed up at their tent to announce that next year at this time, Sarah would have a child – age 90. She laughed, laughed at God...beyond possibility. Age and barrenness logically say impossible.
3. Then comes the important line: Is anything too hard for the Lord?
4. Folks I believe this is the fundamental question that all people must answer – even before do you believe in Jesus?

Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Unfortunately, I believe culture says yes. It lives in a closed system, of human logic and hopelessness. It refuses to let God be God. It will not give God freedom to act.

If we answer no, we acknowledge God and then the systems of life are open and God is free to act and surprise and bring new life.

It's time to laugh again.

IV. It's time to laugh

A. God has a plan –

Think of Abraham and Sarah – 100, 90 – giving up hope. But God had a plan. They had planned all their life, failure ... but they had trusted, followed his word, moved with him. Bottom line, they believed it was in their own hands...

They had prepared for God's plan ... be in his presence. Mold themselves to his will.

Reggie McNeal – difference between preparation and planning.

Preparation – doing the things we need to do to be open to God.

Planning – doing the things we want to make God conform to our will.

God has a plan – as your SIM – OLCC. Future ... It might not look like the 80's or 90's, but we see God working it out.

In our own lives – grads, parents, individuals – God has a plan for your life...prepare, trust. Favorite verse of many: Romans 8. All things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

It might not feel good at the moment...

It might not seem good to our understanding...

In fact, the circumstances might not be good, but God will work, he has a plan. TESTIMONY. Our hope... nothing else but trust.

God is in charge – we can laugh

B. God doesn't use the strong of this world – so that his glory might be known.

What if Isaac had been born to a 40 year old man and a 30 year old woman? What's so amazing about that? Instead he used Sarah and Abraham in their barren years.

Way of God – too young – David

An adulterer - David

Couldn't speak and impatient – Moses

A man who loved the high life more than spiritual life - Solomon

The disciples – fishermen, terrorist, tax collector

Even the style of the birth of Jesus – to a virgin, in a stable instead of a palace.

And the apostle to the Gentiles, author of much of the NT – Paul – a murderer and chief among sinners.

That Paul would write – foolishness of God is stronger than the wisdom of men.

God has at OLCC what he desires for this time –

In your own life – feeling weak – maybe that is when God is most strong, closer to you, working in his way. Wait, trust in the Lord.

Jesus once asked the disciples: are you going to leave me too.

They answered, where else can we go, you have the words of eternal life.

God uses the battered – we can laugh.

C. God gave signs – next year a child.

Our signs – budget – mission faith promise pledges – a unified search team – an RCA classis that made everything right for Roc's ordination and installation.

Are our eyes open – rely on our own doing.

Next Sunday – an infant baptism and an adult baptism –

Two Sundays later – a new members class

Signs – we are nearly on budget – unique for May.

D. Rejoice in the Lord –

Sarah laughed at God – but don't you love it. He didn't say stop laughing, didn't say how dare you, didn't say you laughed at me so I'll take it all back, -- all he said were the powerful words, is anything too hard for the Lord?"

A year later, she laughed **in** the Lord.

First sermon here from Philippians 4: Rejoice _____ in the Lord. It is time to laugh.

Celebration – June 14, Chandler, at the Kerrs – celebration, games, fun, food, excitement – a time to bring friends to a good day. Christians at play...rejoice in the Lord.

Time to celebrate, laugh, rejoice.

E. Martin Lloyd Jones – great preacher – it is a battle for souls, heaven and hell ... but maybe he missed the point. We laugh because God has had the last word ... already. We laugh – death where is your sting, where is your victory. We have seen the victory in Christ ... time to celebrate.