

**The Princess Bride**  
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**Genesis 18: 1-15 New International Version**

*The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.*

*He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant."*

*"Very well," they answered, "do as you say."*

*So, Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread."*

*Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.*

*"Where is your wife, Sarah?" they asked him.*

*"There, in the tent," he said.*

*Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son."*

*Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So, Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?" Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son."*

*Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh."*

*But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."*

How many here have seen the movie **The Princess Bride**?

“The Princess Bride” is a child’s fairytale about a beautiful princess who falls in love with a handsome young man –but before they can get married the beautiful princess is kidnapped by a scheming, bald little guy and his two friends, a slow but good-hearted giant and the Inigo Montoya, the swash-buckling sword fighter.

And while these kidnappers are trying to get away, the bald little guy keeps saying his favorite word, “**Inconceivable!**” (with a lisp, too!)

And every time he says it, we laugh, why? Because every time he thinks something is “**absolutely, totally, and in every other way completely inconceivable**” it actually happens.

But when God makes a promise to Sarah and Sarah says (if you’ll pardon a terrible pun), “*Inconceivable!*” we didn’t laugh. Why is that?

Because she was right.

In fact, Sarah did laugh, and Abraham laughed. They laughed because the thing God promised was hopelessly impossible. I mean, we are talking about two exceedingly senior citizens – Sarah was 90 and Abraham 100 years of age. Sarah laughed, because she had long ago stopped hoping for children.

(Just an aside, *Serai* or **Sarah** means ‘*princess*’ and **Abram** means ‘father’ and **Abraham** means ‘*father of many*’...)

Month after month, year after year she and Abraham loved and were loved and in the morning she would wonder, “Could it be that God is answering our prayers? Maybe this year (just maybe!) God’s promise will come true. Perhaps now is the time when I will bear the promised child.”

But it never was.

And then came midlife and Sarah didn’t wonder any more. She knew then that she would never have a son or a daughter. And so she went about her work as usual as if nothing were the matter, but inside she was crying, and sometimes, if you looked closely enough, you might have noticed her eyes filling with tears.

But that was long ago ...

So when God came again to renew the promise that she would have a son, Sarah only laughed. Nope, too old, ain't gonna happen!

Sarah and Abraham laughed because God's timing was all off. This doesn't mean that Abraham and Sarah had lost their faith in God. In fact, we are clearly told that Abraham had a very close relationship with God. This was no shallow faith. Long ago he had committed himself to walking with God in obedience and humility for the rest of his life.

Sarah, too had faith. After she laughed, the Lord challenged her, *"Is anything too hard for the Lord?"*

Well, of course there isn't. God can do anything. But after a lifetime of disappointment, a lifetime of barrenness they laughed, and denied laughing.

Let's fast forward to another time and place. Several of Jesus' disciples have seen him following his death – but Thomas had missed out on all the excitement. He doubted and Jesus understood why – this was a young man who needed proof in the solid and discernible. So he appeared again and Thomas was there. Thomas touched Jesus' wounds and then he too believed.

By now we know who the Abrahams and the Sarahs and the Thomases are. They are all of us!

Our name is Sarah, for we too live with barrenness, and wonder why God has not heard our prayers! Our name is Abraham, for we too have made our deals with life, our small compromises. We too have learned to live with less.

Our name is Thomas, for who is there among us who has not felt a crushing loss or disappointment? And yet. . . And yet, we believe.

But when we think again about our barrenness we doubt and laugh and deny laughing. We hear God's promise and we see our lives and they don't match up. How can we possibly hold them together when realities and promises stand so far apart?

And so we ask ourselves, after a lifetime of barrenness, is there still hope?

After three days of death, can there be new life?

And we answer, with that poor father of the gospels,

“God, I believe! Help my unbelief!”

The miracle, of course, is that even though Abraham and Sarah were old, even though she was barren, and even though they laughed, and denied laughing, a year later God visited them, and they had a son!

The miracle is that even though Thomas doubted, and even though he declared his doubt with all the anger and pain of a shattered faith, a week later Jesus came to him, and showed him his hands and side.

Beloved, the miracle is that in spite of all the evidence that points otherwise, in spite of all our laughter and denial, bargains or doubts, in a little while Christ will come to us, and in Jesus all God’s promises will be “Yes!” fulfilled beyond our highest dreams and deepest prayers.

And then we will bow, and worship, and with all the other Abrahams and Sarahs and Thomases cry out, “My Lord and my God”; “I was blind, but now I see”; “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”; “O Lord, What a Morning!”

Inconceivable?– I don’t believe so. Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me. *Holy One, so much of our lives have impossible and inconceivable written all over them – cleanse our hearts of doubt and fear and open us to the almighty power that is yours, O God! Amen.*