

Devotion for April 27, 2020 “Hospitality”

Scripture Genesis 18:1-14

Genesis 18:1-14 New International Version (NIV)

18 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. ² 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.

³ He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord,^[a] do not pass your servant by. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. ⁵ 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.”

⁶ 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.”

⁷ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. ⁸ 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.

⁹ “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.

“There, in the tent,” he said.

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

¹³ Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for

the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

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Today we are looking at an Old Testament scripture from Genesis! It is the story of Abraham and Sarah finding out that they will have a son, in their old age. To some of us Sarah’s laughter is not surprising. I know I would have laughed, out loud, if someone told me I was going to have a son!

Let us put this story in perspective. The first thing we learn it that “The LORD appeared to Abraham. This was not just anyone stopping by in the heat of the day, it was God with two angels. Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent. This would have given him a good view of anyone approaching, however when he looked up there were three strangers. We do not know if Abraham immediately knew it was God in human form, Abraham did show the proper respect to the leader of the three men by bowing to the ground in respect and as was the custom, showed great hospitality by preparing a meal for the three visitors.

Hospitality is still shown today, and it may be different depending on the region of the country or the time of year.

Abraham tells Sarah to get fine flour to make bread-if you have ever made bread, from scratch, you know it takes a while. Abraham then selected a choice, tender calf and had it prepared. He also brought curds and milk for the guests. This was not a quick microwave meal (something I have used often over the last weeks), no this was a labor-intensive meal with choice meat and bread.

What do we do when suddenly we have guests for a meal? My dad had a habit of calling mom around 4:30, usually on a Thursday or Friday afternoon and announce that so and so from someplace was in town and THEY would be home for dinner at 6:00 Mom was a trooper, the two of us would dash around straitening the house, go to the grocery story for important things for dinner, and have drinks and hors D’ oeuvres ready as Dad and the guest walked in the door at 6:00. Dinner was served at 7:00 with dessert (store-bought, mom was not a baker!) and then the men would

retire to the living room to discuss business. This was back in the 60's, perhaps some of us may still do this, and some of us may not.

Abraham and Sarah showed the three men hospitality, at some point Abraham knows that it is God visiting with two angels, but because of their culture they would have welcomed strangers with great hospitality.

We are in unusual times, there are strict orders from our Governor to stay home and practice social distancing. Many of us have health concerns or someone in the family has them, therefore we are more careful, more cautious about being with people. Soon we will begin to gather for worship again, in our church building. We have plans to thoroughly clean the building as a precaution, we will continue practicing social distancing, unfortunately hugging will not be done right away no matter how much we yearn for a hug, even shaking hands will not happen. But what if we have new guests come to worship with us? How hospitable will we be? Will just nod our head as a greeting? Say hello from six feet away? These are hard questions for us to consider. Those of us who live alone, whether we are accustomed to not having someone to touch, even those single people may be hungering for a pat on the shoulder or even a hug! Perhaps the new guests also desire a warm hand touching them?

We need to think about this from all angles, and we must talk about it also. We want to be hospitable to guests, yet we want to protect those of us who have real health concerns. What do you think?

Have a wonderful afternoon and evening! Thank you for joining me today.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen