

Genesis 18:1-14

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[0:00] The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Saint Luke.

! Glory to you, Lord Christ.! A sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?

Tell her then to help me. But the Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary.

Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her. The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Christ.

[1:13] Lord, speak to us your word. Lord, may my words be your way, your words, this day. We pray in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

Well, please be seated. Have you ever heard that phrase, He who laughs, laughs, laughs best? It's kind of a forgotten phrase. I looked it up. It comes from the Old English in the 17th century. The meaning is generally, The one who seems not successful now May very well be the one who is successful in the future.

My mind rushed to this year's Kentucky Derby. I don't know if any of you watched that. There was a horse, I didn't bet on that, But anyway, There was a horse Who was entered in at the last minute. He had been in the wait list. Have you ever been on a wait list? He was on the wait list. And at the last hour, A horse was scratched.

[2:26] And he was put into the race. His odds were 80 to 1. There were 20 horses in the race. He was number 20.

Which meant he was on the outside. He would have the longest run of all those horses. And as he started the race, He sure looked like an also-ran.

He was dead last. Halfway through the race. And then about three quarters of the way through the race, Something seemed to happen. It was like he went into afterburner.

And Rich Strike won. It was amazing. 80 to 1 odds. He who laughs last, Laughs best.

So in our Old Testament lesson today, There's some laughing going on. We're going to talk about that. Who laughed last? In that passage. Let's take a look at it.

[3:32] It's in your Bibles on page 14. In the Old Testament. It's from Genesis chapter 18, verses 1 through 14.

A subtitle might be, Sarah laughed. Let's see about that. Now, to get the context, There were these two people.

They looked a lot like today's Bedolans. One's name was Abram. The other was Sarai. And you get the idea of them sort of wandering around in the desert with some sheep and some cattle, living in tents.

You think, What in the world? That's like coming in at 80 to 1 odds. What could they offer humanity? Well, there's the rest of the story.

It was not just Abram and Sarai. They had a tent city. When they moved, Hundreds of tents moved with them.

[4:38] Because Abram was a chieftain. He was responsible for a lot of people. And so, In his tent city, What he said went.

Well, he had had contact with this kind of a vision. And in the vision, This voice said, Abram, I'm changing your name To Abraham.

Well, Abram means father. Abraham means father of nations. And he said, Not only that, But I'm changing your wife's name From Sarai, Which means my sweetheart princess, To Sarah, Princes of

the world.

Well, Abraham knew he was a chieftain. And he knew he had hundreds of people Depending on him. But he had never thought about himself As king of the world. As the father of the world. What did he do with that? Well, being a typical husband, He did nothing with it. So God decided, There must be another way To deal with this guy.

[5 : 51] And that's where we get into The passage for today. Verse 1, And the Lord appeared to Abraham By the oaks of Mamre, As he sat at the door of his tent In the heat of the day.

Mamre is where Hebron is in Israel. Hebron is a little bit south of Jerusalem. Abraham actually had no property Except one cave in Mamre.

He had bought that cave As a place later to bury his wife Sarah. And in fact, He was buried there later And his children. So he's sitting there In the heat of the day.

Anybody ever been in the Holy Land In the summertime? Yeah, it's hot. It's hotter than Europe right now. Europe's going through a heat wave, you know.

101 degrees in London. Well, it was hotter than that Where Abraham was sitting In his tent city. And he probably was lulling off to sleep.

[7 : 02] Now last week, We had a picnic. A lot of you went to that picnic. Parish picnic. And about mid-afternoon, I think a lot of us started to get weary In the heat of the day.

And as I thought the picnic was ending, More people showed up From another church. What a great gift for them to come.

And suddenly eyes went from We went from I'm going home To I'm the host. Well, this is what happened To Abraham.

He was getting a little Shut-eye in the shade. And then we get to Verse 2 He lifted up his eyes And looked And behold, Three men were standing In front of him.

How would you like to be Awakened from a nap? Three people are there That you don't even know. Didn't even know who they were. They just showed up. Now, Bible language Three men.

[8 : 05] What does that mean? Three men. Looking at it from a Christian perspective This was a visit from God. Father, Son, Holy Spirit. God Arriving In the form of Three angelic beings.

They arrived. Abraham didn't know Who they were at first. He didn't know that was God. When he saw them He ran from the tent door To meet them And bowed himself To the earth.

We're about ready to see Middle Eastern hospitality Kick in. In those days There were not many restaurants. Chili's had not started yet.

There were not many Hotels to stay in. You probably couldn't find A Marriott anywhere During that day. And so what happened was People wandering along Or traveling Were often Taken in To be cared for.

And so Abraham Was simply Being a host. When you had a visitor You were responsible For that visitor. You were responsible For their life.

[9 : 24] It was a serious thing Being a host. And so He bows himself To the earth And says Oh Lord Oh Lord Why did he call him Lord?

If you look back In the Hebrew That means That it's translated From Adonai The Lord God He somehow Was beginning To understand That this was What we call A theophany A visit from God Into his life Lord If I have found Favor in your sight Do not pass By your servant Let a little water Be brought Wash your feet Rest yourselves Under the tree While I bring A morsel of bread That you may Refresh yourselves And after that You may pass on Since you have Come to your servant He's saying I'm your host I'm taking responsibility For you That's what he's doing Okay And they said Well Do as you have said They had An agenda But they were letting Abraham sort of Move that agenda As he was able And so in verse 6

Abraham Went quickly Into the tent To Sarah And said Quick Three seahs Of fine flour Kneaded And make cakes Now Have you ever Have you bought a seah Of bread lately?

No It's not a measurement So you have to Look it up And see how much That is That's a loaf About this big And she made Three of them One for each That is the hospitality We go beyond What you can eat You can take it home This is a takeaway As they say A doggy bag You can take that With you Major But here's a question Alright He had Hundreds of people Responsible For him Why Did he tell Sarah To fix the bread?

They had servants That did things Like that Well The reason is This is the way You treated Special guests You did it Personally And so We had A guest That stayed with us Three weeks ago Her

husband Was in the hospital And by golly It was such a thrill To host her We went We scurried around And scurried around And cleaned up The guest bedroom And the bathroom And got some food in We wanted to make it Good for her While her husband Was in the hospital That's what we're Called to do To be personally Involved In people's lives And so Sarah Now is Getting things ready Cooking the bread And Abraham It says in verse 7 Ran to the herd And took a calf Tender and good And gave it to a young man Who prepared it quickly A calf

[12 : 29] Do you know what That's called today? Veal Some people don't like The idea of veal Because it's calf meat But this was The greatest of gifts You could give Young calf Tender and good He The very best He was preparing For the guests And then when it was All ready It says in verse 8 He took curds That's butter And milk And the calf He had prepared And I'm sure The bread Sarah had made And set it all Before them And then he stood By them under the tree While they ate Kind of bouncing From one foot To the next Is there enough milk?

We've got to make sure You're well taken care of Here is this Tribal chieftain Worth in today's world Millions Standing as a waiter For his guests They ate And then the business began In Middle Eastern society Often you have to go Through the pleasantries Before you get to The business at hand Okay Our president Was in the Middle East This week Right?

He was coming home He had to go through These pleasantries Before he could get To the business at hand That's the way It is still today In the Middle East And so the business Begins Verse 9 They said to him Where is Sarah Your wife?

Well wait a minute Abraham thinks Nobody knows Her name is now Sarah Except me And God He's beginning To put this all together And so he says Probably a little Wimpishly She's in the tent And then the Lord Said I will surely Return to you About this Time Next year And Sarah Your wife Will have a son Now here's the problem One chapter Before this What does God Say to Abraham When he Changes their names He says Sarah is going To have a baby Abraham I have to say this I'm a husband Abraham Forgot to tell His wife this He just You know I got my car key I'm going to be late

For my doctor's appointment I'll tell her later So Do you think Sarah was a little Surprised So it says And Sarah Was listening At the tent door Behind him Now Parentheses Abraham and Sarah were old He was a hundred She was ninety Get it The way of Women Had certainly ceased With Sarah A few years before And so Sarah Who had not been told This by her husband Laughed to herself Saying After I'm worn out And my Lord Is old Shall I have pleasure A couple of things To remember here Abraham was told This a chapter ago He forgot to tell His wife Number two Sarah Had always Wanted to have A baby

[16 : 04] She was what Was called Barren She could not Bear children She'd spent years In sadness And crying Because she could Not have a baby And she had Given up Long ago Given up on her Prayers And now she Hears this From some guy She doesn't even Know Who's eating Outside her tent Is this a cruel Joke And so When it says Sarah laughed It doesn't mean Wonderful joy It was a It was a laugh Of scorn Of frustration Ha Ha She says After I'm worn out My Lord is old Shall I have pleasure She gives up And the Lord says To Abraham Why did Sarah Laugh Why did she say Shall I indeed

A bear a child Now that I'm old Is anything Too hard For the Lord I ask you that question Is anything Too hard For the Lord We move From the story To application What does this Mean for us Today In our daily Struggles Well I have noticed In my years That young people Have a question Young adults Have three questions Who am I Why am I here Where am I going I've noticed That older people Have three questions Who am I Why am I here Where am I going The questions Come in a little Different fashion I have noticed Younger people Are more What's going to Happen tomorrow How do we

Raise these kids Are we going to Have money At the end Of the month Are we going to Have the end Of the month And no money Those tend To be What are going On What's going To become Of me They have Secret desires That they're Afraid to Even mention I have noticed That older People have Different kind Of questions But they're The same What's going To become Of me Am I going To suffer A long time Before I die Am I going To run Out of Money In retirement Is anybody Going to Be sorry When I die My mother Who died At an old Age In 95 Said that She was Sorry that Her friends Had died On her Now she Was sorry That her Children Were dying On her Where is God in All this Different Questions People ask But they Come down To the same Thing My desires Lord Are you Listening Do you Hear What I'm Going Through See for Sarah She was

An inquiring Mind She wasn't Sure what Was going To become Of them When it Came right Down to What's Inside A lot Of us Put a Mask On Everything Is Wonderful I'm So Happy Went Inside We're Dying Sarah Wondered Where This To Go Abraham Being a Typical Guy She said Well if God said It Let's Do It Let's Have The Baby Okay He Trusted In Almighty God You know There's A passage In Romans Chapter 4 It Says No Distrust

Made Abraham Waver Concerning The Promise Of God But He Grew Strong In His Faith As He Gave Glory To God As He Gave Glory To God Fully Convinced That God Was Able To Do All He Had Promised I Want To Make A Plug For The Monday Night Manuscript Bible Study We're Going Through Romans And This Is One Of The Subjects How Do We Trust God Come You're Welcome Seven O'clock Downstairs Monday Nights Let's Give Glory To God And Renew This Trust He Has For Us I Want To Tell You A Funny Story Do You Remember When The State Quarters Came Out Each State Had A Different Quarter Well Typical Of Poor California Some Of You Are From California Typical Of Poor!

[21 : 06] California In 2005 Somehow There Was A Mistake Made On The Coin This Is A True Story Instead Of It Saying In God We Trust It Said In God We Rust They Had A Fun Time Scooping Up These Quarters So They Could Melt Them Down And Do It Again If You Got One A Quarter Check It It's Worth Money But In Fact Distrust Of God Brings Rust To Our Faith We Get Corroded Distrust Of God Brings Corrosion Now God Is Able Is Anything Too Hard For The Lord No Does God Do Things Exactly The Way I Want Them To Be Done No A Great Bumper

Sticker Said I'm Glad God Did It His Way Rather Than My Way Sarah Prayed For Years That She Would Have A Baby Well She Got A Baby Didn't She In A Little Unexpected Way That She Thought This Has Happened To Me Not Having A Baby But Praying And Then Getting An Answer That I Never Expected A Lot Of You Know That In 2007 I Felt I Could No Longer Be A Bishop In The Episcopal Church I Felt It Had Moved Away From Its Biblical Roots And I Left It Cost Me It Cost Me Financially It Cost Me In People's Eyes In My Own Family's Eyes Reading The Newspaper Articles What Has Happened To Him He He Has Gone To Church In Nigeria Who Would Do Such A Thing Well In Fact

I Had Been Praying For Years That The Episcopal Church Would Turn Back To Its Biblical Roots Well God Did It In A Very!

He Raised Up A Number Of Us In The Anglican Faith In America Who Wanted To Return Anglicanism To Its Biblical Roots And God's Answer To Answer To Me Was A Very Strange Answer At First But It Was A Wonderful Answer In The End I'm Glad He Did It His Way Rather Than My Way Because It Had Been Done My Way There Be Dead People Hanging Along The Side Of The Road He Did It Well The Unexpected Answer So The Conclusion Jesus Provides That Blessing For You And Me In The Christian Context God Loving Us Assumes Our Nature In Jesus Dies For Us Defeats Death For Us Calls Us Into Union With Him A Trust Relations So We're On The Cusp Here We Can Take One Direction Or Another One Direction Is Shame Sorrow And Fear And There's Plenty In The World To Move Us Into That Category Or We Can Take Another Direction Peace Joy And Fulfillment That's God's Desire For Us That Was His Desire For Sarah And Abraham Laugh For Joy Or Laugh For Anger Oh Who Had The Last Laugh Regarding Sarah They Did Have The Son Next Year Do You Know What They Named Him Isaac You Know What That Word Means He Laughs In The Name Of The Father And The Son And The Holy Spirit Amen Know Know