

June 18, 2023 - Proper 6 Year A

Genesis 18:1-5, 21: 1-7

Romans 5:1-8

Matthew 9:35-10:8 (9-23)

Humans make plans and God laughs. We have all heard that expression but in today's Old Testament reading from Genesis, the tables are turned. God has a plan and is not laughing about it. It is Sarah who finds his prediction laughable and preposterous. To hear that she will bear a son who will be the father of many nations. At her age who would not be surprised. Add to that the fact that she has been barren for years.

I am familiar with both sides of the fence on who is causing the laughter. My so-called plans and great ideas have been not only laughed at by God but thankfully thwarted before I made a fool of myself or got into hot water. But like Sarah I have doubted God's plans for me and if I did not specifically laugh, I certainly found them amusing or highly improbable. I can't be the only one who has said "You want me to do what!" God's plans can pull you out of your comfort zone. They are probably designed that way, or else we would stagnate and not grow. In fact, they may be about something you have never, ever considered. I know this from personal experience. God's plans are stronger than ours - they will succeed while ours fall by the wayside.

We need to always listen for God - not only with our ears but our hearts, our souls and our very being.

Abraham's day most likely started as most, until the three strangers arrived – angels in disguise. In the tradition of desert hospitality, they were offered food and drink and a place to rest. Perhaps they did seem like ordinary mortals until the extraordinary pronouncement about Sarah and Abraham becoming parents. The guests were not what they seemed at first glance – but angels delivering a message that while preposterous did come to pass.

Listen with your whole being – things are not always as they seem.

Paul points out that because of our faith we can enter what God has always wanted for us. God's plans not ours – not the ones that make God laugh. And in doing so actually find ourselves in the place we had secretly longed for. In essence we enter completely into the divine plan and can fully live our praise and love. God arrives right on time to lead us to the place we need to be not waiting for us to get ready. Waiting for us to be ready could be a long time or never, if left to our own devices.

Listen for all the ways God may come to you – in a stranger, in an act of kindness, in a connection with another person. The message requires discernment and attentiveness on our part – it will not be delivered on a silver platter or writ in large print.

If Jesus' message to me was to go out into the villages and towns to deliver the Good News, it would be an introvert's nightmare. But for thousands of years God has asked regular people to do that – to leave their comfort zone. How many figures in the Old Testament protested that they could not deliver God's messages. But the words were put in their mouths, and as prophets they succeeded. Jesus sent his disciples in much the same way. To the local towns – not to far off places. To meet with the sick, the lonely, those needing to hear his message on a personal level. To go to those ready to hear and believe – not to waste time on those who are not receptive. If by some chance they ran afoul of the law, the words they needed to speak would be provided. They would never be alone on their journeys.

Be awake, be aware. Listen and heed the messages that are spoken and unspoken. God is always guiding us. We need to pay attention and follow. Don't make God laugh because of our interference. There is only one true way, and it is not our way.