**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**17th July 2022**

**Gen. 17:15-22**

**Gathering**

It is a sad day

A cold day

And lonely day

When we do not take ourselves seriously enough

To laugh

The laughter of heaven

The resurrection that is God’s response to everything moribund

The last laugh of God on Good Friday

Shapes a faith

Where we are involved

Deeply

Thoroughly

Legitimately

Enough that we can chuckle

At the news

A woman of 90

Is about to become a mother

And a centenarian

Is going to have to learn

To change a nappy

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton, the minister of new Kilpatrick Parish, and thank you for the invitation to be with you today as we find a place of laughter is the holiest place there is, especially when you live under an impossible promise, that has just proved its self to be possible after all. Abraham and Sarah are about to be come parents, and for some reason they find this funny, unbelievable. Well the laugh is on God as it always ends up being.

**Prayer**

Loving God

In the unbelievable truth

Of love

And laughter

And grace

We gather

With a holy smile

And linger in the presence

Shaped by promise

And hope

And longing

May we have faith that holds us

In the real experience of life

Not the logic

Not with answers

But in the relationships

That holds all the conflicting

Illogical

Irreconcilable

Experiences of life

Something real

And honest

And in such a space

May we meet you

As you experience the conflicting

Illogical

Irreconcilable

Truth of the relationship you have with us

It is a human and godly place

Earthly and divine

A unique place of faith

A creative place of faith

An honest place of faith

Where we can confess and hope

Say sorry and laugh again

Share the pain and heal once more

Recognise how we have hurt and know of a new chance

Loving God

Laughing God

Longing God

In this space we find ourselves

May we linger

And be renewed

As we share the Lord’s Prayer

**Reading Intro**

We on the ongoing travels of Abraham to somewhere he will never know and in a generations he hasn’t yet counted. But it is bigger journey that the physical travel. The physical side is more symbolic to the bigger journey of faith, relationship, understanding of who God is and humanity too.

Here we meet the moment God confirms (I think for the fourth time) Abraham and Sarah are going to be parents. They have been living under this promise for quarter of a century now and God reminds them that it is still live. Both Abraham and Sarah, separately respond to this long promise with laughter.

Some will argue over what kind of laughter it is, flippant, angry, cynical, humorous. Whatever it is it is perhaps the only legitimately human response to something ridiculously unbelievable. But the questions with the Bible is, who ends up having the last laugh?

**Reading**

**15**God said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. **16**I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.’ **17**Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, ‘Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?’ **18**And Abraham said to God, ‘O that Ishmael might live in your sight!’ **19**God said, ‘No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac.[a] I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. **20**As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. **21**But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year.’ **22**And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

**Reflection**

Once there was a wise sage who was inviting young searchers for the truth to join him.

It so happened that there were a few and with each he asked the same question:

Two people come down a chimney. One is clean and the other dirty. Which one takes a bath?

Nearly every prospective follower quickly responds: “The dirty one!” To which the sage replies, “Why would would that be. The dirty one would look at the clean one, sees the other is clean and thinks “I much be clean too”. But the clean one would look at the dirty one, see they are dirty and thus decide “I need a bath”. So it is the clean one who takes the bath!”

And each follower shakes his head saying, “Agh, I understand, let me try again?”

So the sage invites each back the following week and poses the same question: Two people come down a chimney. One is clean and the other dirty. Which one takes a bath?

Quickly they all respond, “The clean one!”

And the sage shakes his head now, tutting. “No! Think about it, the clean one will look at their hands, and realises they are clean, but the dirty one will look at their hands, see they are dirty and decide they need a bath. It’s the dirty one who will take the bath.”

The candidates again shake their head one by one. A bit confused but each in turn, asks for another try.

The sage expected this and offers each one last shot. “Two people come down a chimney. One is clean and the other dirty. Which one takes a bath?”

At this point each one hesitates, going over in their minds the options, dirty, or clean, dirty or clean. In the end none of them can choose. They just can’t work out the correct answer. And they plead with the sage what the answer is.

The sage pauses, and sighs: “How is it possible for two people to come down the same chimney and one ends up dirty and the other ends up clean?”

In a faith that is real and engaged, in a faith that is alive in the world, there are always different perspectives. Perhaps we are less comfortable with that when we’ve been hearing so many different versions of the truth in parliament recently, but with faith, it isn’t different versions. It is different perspectives.

And in some way that contradicts the framework of how we have shaped our society. We have grown western civilisation on a philosophy based on logic. The ancient Greeks invented that system and we are the inheritors of that. We argue from the perspective of logic.

So strong has that been, we have applied logic to our faith too. We’ve argued about God, about creation, about morals, from the standpoint of reason. And to do that, you need to be able to stand back, stand outside the situation, and argue as if you were looking in on it. Logic needs you to be unattached. Look at Mr Spock from Star Trek. Logic and emotion don’t go well together.

But faith as described in the bible has a problem with that. It grew up at the same time the Greeks were developing their logical philosophical, but took a radically different direction.

Abraham and Sarah both laughing illustrates this nicely. Instead of God being outside of humanity, God gets involved. And God makes space for humanity to get involved also. This response to the promise God has offered, is evidence of this.

God confers dignity, integrity, legitimacy on humanity. God creates space for humanity in the promise. It means, of course, that there is never only one point of view. There are at least, at the very least, two. There is the point of view on how things appear to God, but also, how they appear to us, and both these points of view are legitimate.

And that dialogue, that listening to and responding to each other, humanity and God, is perhaps one of the most unique features of faith because it is a faith based, not on cold logic and argument but on a relationship. Even one, especially one, where laughter might be the only legitimate response to a promise that is more wild than the wildest dreams you could imagine.

**Prayer**

For the world

For all the world’s people

For all who seek

Hurt

Hunger

Hope

We pray

For those of us in conflict

Because of another’s ambition…

For those of us who hunger

Because of the greed of others…

For those of us who starve

Because of climate change…

For those of us who fear

Because of living costs and uncertainty…

For those of us who hold

Family and friends…

The sick and the ill…

The worried and the concerned…

For the world

For all the world’s people

For all who seek

Hurt

Hunger

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We pray

**Benediction**