

Holy Interruptions 2

“Interruption is God’s invitation. God is inviting us to see our world in a new way, in the lives of others, in our conversations, in the sign that’s always been there, but never noticed. Interruption is not simply a matter of our heart developing patience; it’s about experiencing life on a deeper level. It is one of God’s ways of waking us up to what’s around us, to see there’s more to be done than our self-appointed tasks for the day, as important as they may seem. Interruption is God’s enhancement of our craft and our mission, God’s encouragements to take an active part in cultivating God’s reign.” Joseph Tenney



The social and physical distancing of the pandemic has caused me to imagine what life will be like when I retire. All this dreaming, however, will never prepare me for the kind of “interruption” that Sarah experienced in her golden years: **The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him.... They said to him, ‘Where is your wife Sarah?’ And he said, ‘There, in the tent.’ Then one said, ‘I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.’ And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ‘After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?’ The LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, and say, “Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?” Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.’** Genesis 18:1, 9-14

For years it seems, God had been promising Abraham and Sarah a child. By this time Abraham was already one hundred years old, which is the Bible’s way of telling us that they were well beyond their fertile years. In that ancient world, there was no shortage of young people around a prosperous household like theirs – life would go on. But God interrupted their retirement plans, with the birth of a baby. Luckily Sarah never lost her ability to laugh, sometimes it’s all you can do. Is there a spirituality of laughter? Laughter ignites our imagination, laughter helps us to see beyond the holes we’ve dug ourselves into. The birth of Isaac did that for Sarah – it was the banana-peel ending to years of longing for a child, and seeing other women bear them so easily. She embodied abundant life, however, when God helped her let go of her own agenda and expectations, and open herself to a new chapter.

Let us pray:

O God, sometimes we do not know what is around the corner for us. We often dread the coming changes and then we broadcast our own pessimism. But you give us a cup overflowing with hope – laughter to be our medicine – unexpected new life when we have anticipated endings. And where there are endings, you give us a love that never ends. Surprise and bless us with a new chapter, we pray, and the joyful attitude to embrace it. Send your spirit on us, that we might delight in all that we encounter. Amen