

“Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?”
Genesis 18:1-15
August 14th, 2016

I’m not “*that* guy”...but I’d like to begin by sharing something that happened to me that might lead you to think that I could be...“*that* guy.”

We wandered through the gift store for 20 minutes or so when we heard over a loud speaker, “Jan party of 5.” A hostess took us to our table, welcomed us, and gave us menus. We sat down and began looking for something to eat. “Hi, my name is Devyn, and I’ll be taking care of you today.” So said the young man who was our waiter at the Cracker Barrel restaurant in Normal, Illinois last Sunday.

Jan, Zach, Molly, Victoria (Zach’s girlfriend) and I had just sat down to enjoy a late lunch after worship. I was particularly hungry, since I didn’t have much for breakfast. Devyn asked what we’d like to drink, and I ordered coffee with creamer and a glass of water.

When he returned with our drinks, Devyn set a nice cup of hot coffee before me. No creamer and no glass of water, I noticed. I gave him the benefit of the doubt since he was serving 5 people, thinking it may be coming with his return trip to our table.

But, that didn’t happen right away. As we waited for our food to arrive, I finished my cup of coffee. Still, no sight of Devyn, except at the neighboring table. As a waitress approached our table, I held out my empty coffee cup, and asked her if I could please get a re-fill. She gladly obliged.

Our food arrived at the table, and as our plates were set before us, Devyn asked if there was anything else we needed. I asked him if he could bring some Cholula hot sauce which I planned to sprinkle over my chicken-fried chicken and blackberry preserves for my steaming hot biscuits. He said he’d be right back, and I began to enjoy my delicious lunch.

To bring this story to a close, Devyn didn’t bring either the hot sauce or the blackberry preserves to our table. I even had to get a second refill of my coffee cup from yet another waitress who had passed by our table enroute to one of her own.

Needless to say, I was just a bit disappointed with our waiter. We still gave him a tip, and didn’t complain about him to management or the cashier on the way out. I decided to exercise some grace (which, I tell you can be difficult for me when I’m hungry!) and not be of trouble that day.

Devyn could surely take lessons from Abraham, the father of nations. In the passage before us today, Abraham stands out as a model of incredible, God-fearing hospitality.

Yet, Abraham’s example of hospitality isn’t the main point of today’s Scripture passage. The main Figure in this passage of sacred Scripture is One of the visitors who came to Abraham’s tent one day, and the message of grace that he brought to Abraham and Sarah.

Genesis 18:1-15:

“Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ²So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, ³and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. ⁴Please let a little

water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.”

They said, “Do as you have said.”

⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead *it* and make cakes.” ⁷ And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave *it* to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. ⁸ So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

⁹ Then they said to him, “Where *is* Sarah your wife?”

So he said, “Here, in the tent.”

¹⁰ And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” (Sarah was listening in the tent door which *was* behind him.) ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. ¹² Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

¹³ And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear *a child*, since I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”

¹⁵ But Sarah denied *it*, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid.

And He said, “No, but you did laugh!”

These verses can be divided into two primary sections:

MP 1 – The Friendship of God (verses 1-8);

MP 2 – The Foolishness of God (verses 9-15)

Isn't it a wonderful thing that God, the Almighty Creator of the heavens and the earth, isn't too big to come to us? As Genesis chapter 18 opens, God comes to Abraham. God appears physically as one of the three men who visited Abraham outside of his tent in “the heat of the day.” One of those three men is “the LORD” as verses 1 and 13 in today's passage indicate. The other two men were angels as the opening verse of the next chapter (19) describes them.

The Lord and two of His angels came to Abraham that day because Abraham was God's friend. In at least three places in sacred Scripture, Abraham is referred to as God's friend. Two Old Testament verses are **2 Chronicles 20:7** and **Isaiah 41:8**. One New Testament reference is **James 2:23** – “And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.”

The first 8 verses of today's passage give us many proofs that God and Abraham were friends.

For sure, we see it in **Abraham's greeting** in verse 3 – “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.” The Hebrew word for “Lord” here is ‘*adonay*’ which means, “My sovereign, my Lord.” This was very likely a pre-incarnate appearance on earth of God the Son, Jesus Christ – the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We see this taking place, on occasion in the Old Testament, at key points in the unfolding covenant of God's grace with His people. Somehow (we're not told precisely), Abraham knew that these three men deserved his honor and respect.

It was almost as if Abraham said, “I'm Abraham, and I'll be taking care of you, today!”

In addition to his words, **Abraham's actions** were proofs that he and God were friends. Abraham took prompt action to serve the LORD and His angels:

- * Verse 2 – Abraham ran to meet them & he bowed himself to the ground;
- * Verse 6 – Abraham hurried into the tent and told Sarah to quickly prepare food;
- * Verse 7 – Abraham ran to pick out a calf from the herd;
- * Verse 7 – The man Abraham gave the calf to prepare, hastened to do so.

Not only did Abraham show urgency to greet and serve his divine guests, but he was most generous in doing so.

* Verse 6 – Abraham instructed Sarah to make “three measures of fine meal... to make cakes.” Perhaps your version of Scripture says three “seahs” here. “Seah” is a Hebrew term of measurement roughly equivalent to 7 quarts. Abraham told Sarah to make *three* of them, so that would have been about 6 gallons (2 gallons per guest!)

* Verse 7 – Abraham hand selected a “tender and good” calf for his guest’s meal. *An entire* calf! That’s a lot of steak!

* And that wasn’t all! In addition, he gave his guests butter (curds) and milk.

Abraham was a generous host who lavished hospitality upon his heavenly visitors. This incident could be what the writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews had in mind when he wrote in **Hebrews 13:2** – “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels.”

So, in the first 8 verses we see the **friendship of God**. As we transition now to verses 9-15, we see what could be called the **“foolishness” of God**.

The Lord and two of His angels also came to Abraham that day because they had an announcement to make. This is the 4th time in the Genesis account that God has announced Abraham would father a son that would be the heir of God’s promises. (We’ve seen that previously in Genesis chapters 12, 15, and 17). Jesus here in verses 10 and 14 clarifies precisely what God the Father told Abraham immediately before this chapter (**Genesis 17:21**), “But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.”

Sarah’s response in hearing Jesus’ promise here in verse 12 was the same as Abraham’s in **Genesis 17:17** – she laughed. When confronted with God’s promise, both Abraham and Sarah laughed! We know that Sarah had been infertile all her life – she was barren, unable to have children of her body. At this point in time in Genesis chapter 18, she was 90 years of age and post-menopausal. “She was doubly dead in respect to child-bearing. The promise that she would be a mother next year was absurd.” (Hughes, 256)

But, God’s reply to the laughter is one of the great promises in all of human history, in all of the sacred Scriptures. Look again with me at the first part of verse 14 – “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” *What’s the answer to that, dear ones? Is anything too hard for the LORD?”*

What does our verse of the week (bulletin) say? Jeremiah 32:17 – “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.” **Jeremiah 32:17**

“God delights in doing that which is impossible, marvelous, even surpassing.” (Ross, 344)
Time after time, God makes amazing, otherworldly promises that only He can bring about. And, this is an important thought in the passage before us. The Bible teaches that God will do what He has promised though it seems incredible. The question here in verse 14 –“Is anything too hard for the LORD?” is tied to a promise.

And that is how we are to use it – God has given us amazing promises. Consider just three:

*We have the promise of forgiveness – **Ephesians 1:7** - “In Him (Jesus) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, all of your sins – the ones in your past, the ones you presently struggle with, and the ones in your future – all have been atoned for by Jesus Christ on the cross.

*We have the promise of life – **John 11:25-26** – “Jesus said... “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” Well, do you?

*We have the promise of security – **John 6:37** – “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”

The promise to Sarah was the annunciation of an impossible birth. This birth causes us to also remember another impossible birth. At the annunciation of the birth of Jesus Christ, Mary likewise could not understand how such a thing could be – and it was more difficult in her case. Yet the angel Gabriel encouraged Mary with familiar sounding words as we find them in Luke’s account of the gospel (**Luke 1:37**) - “For with God nothing will be impossible.” God miraculously provided the long-awaited seed to Mary as well as to Sarah.

It was almost as if Jesus were saying, “I’m Jesus, and I’ll be taking care of you, today!” And He will today, tomorrow, the next day, and even forever!

You see, the Lord fellowships with His people. The Lord’s Supper is a fellowship meal set apart only for Jesus and His people – those who trust in Him for this life and the next one. The Supper has richer meaning in light of the fellowship meal here in Genesis 18 where God and two of his angels dine with Abraham.

So, be encouraged, dear one. If you are not a Christian, God may be calling you to trust in Him at this very moment. Don’t resist- surrender to Him. Become a child of God by faith. And, fellow Christian, you also be encouraged – you are God’s friend. The person you are praying for to repent God is able to humble; the broken relationship in your life, God is able to restore; the rebellious children in your home, God is able to save.