

# Title: The Christmas Son: Isaac

**Text: Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-7**

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## Introduction

Over the next three Sunday evenings we are going to take some time to reflect on the Advent season through the lens of the Old Testament. We will be highlighting three “sons” whose births are recorded in the Old Testament. They are miracle children. Tonight we will look at Isaac. Next week we will consider Obed. And two weeks from tonight we will be thinking about the birth of Samuel.

Tonight... we are in Genesis 18.

Why do we laugh? Anthropologists have been studying that question for years, even centuries. Freud looked at it. Darwin studied it. They, of course, were attempting to probe the question without consideration to a Creator. But there is something laughter unique to humans. Laughter seems to be in our DNA. So much so, that when someone does not laugh when the occasion calls for such, we think: what’s wrong with that guy? Laughter seems to be predicated on situation and environment, and yet, it is subconscious. We laugh without consciously prompting ourselves to do it. We know a fake laugh when we hear it. Laughter is used in therapy. Laughter really is the best medicine, creating positive environments in healing. Laughter is contagious... it is more often than not, shared in the community. One person laughs and pretty soon everyone is laughing. Laughter is occasional, usually prompted by something that happens outside of our control, out of the ordinary that provides humor and comedy in a life situation or story. Even though it is subconscious, laughter can be orchestrated: we will pay \$40 a seat for two hours just to have Jim Gaffigan or Brian Regan provide occasions for laughter. Laughter is big business, a billion dollar industry. Laughter provides tension relief. Studies have even been done on why we laugh at funerals, times when the occasion isn’t all that funny. There, of course, is the dark side or fallen side to laughter. Mockery is laughter perverted. Scorn and ridicule can be damaging occasions for laughter. The smirk, made famous by our vice president, is another subtle form of adverse laughter. As fallen creatures, good laughter can turn ugly. It is a reminder that laughter, like the rest of the image of God in man, needs the gracious redemptive touch of our Redeemer.

And that brings us to our topic and text this evening. Laughter is at the heart of the salvation story. We don’t think much about that, do we? There are some obvious reasons for that. Our sin, so great, is a serious matter. We deserve God’s wrath. That’s not a laughing matter. The cost Christ paid to satisfy God’s wrath and rectify the sin problem is no laughing matter. There is nothing funny about the cross and the judgment and damnation borne by our Savior. We do well to take our sin and our Savior seriously.

But there’s another part of our salvation story that we must not miss, if we are going to understand this wonder that God has wrought in his son Jesus Christ: The laughter of our salvation. If we had not considered it before, our text this morning forces us to reckon with the laughter of our salvation... in the birth of a son.

## Recap: Sarah is barren

Turn in your Bibles to Genesis 18.

Quick recap of what leads us to Genesis 18. By the time we arrive in Genesis 18, Abraham and Sarah have been nomads wandering the boundaries of the promised land for more than 30 years. A lot has transpired since Abraham was called from Ur into a covenant with a God who promised to make his name great and give him offspring as numerous as the sand of the seashore. But there was one problem. The writer of Genesis, Moses, tips his readers off early on. At first, it may seem innocuous. Almost inconsequential. In Genesis 11, in the record of Abraham's pedigree, Moses makes note of what at that time must have seemed like a small detail. Moses chronicles this:

And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah...Now Sarai was barren; she had no child. Terah took Abram his son and Lot, his grandson...and they all went to Haran, and here's what they did and here's thus and so.

The story of Abraham begins here, prior to his call to Canaan. And tucked among the details is this: Sarai was barren; she had no child. She has no child, and they're off to Haran. Just an incident of the text. Or is it? No sooner are we told that Sarai is barren, having no child, 3 verses later in our text, God calls Abram out of Haran, and to Canaan and he says, "I will make you a great nation... and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." Sarah is barren. She has no child. I will make of you a great nation.

OK... Moses' original readers should begin to get a sense of unease. Sarai is barren. The Creator God of Heaven and Earth covenants with Abraham to make of him a great nation. Verse 7 of chapter 12, God tells Abraham "to your descendants I will give this land." The covenant is restated again and again in various stages of Abraham's journey, always the promise of descendants, and an offspring. God's promises to Abraham are extravagant, if not unbelievable. The entire earth will be filled with Abraham's prosperity. It is unbelievable, yet Abraham believes God and it is counted to him as righteousness.

As we progress through the chapters of Genesis, year after year goes by... more than 30 years after the first promise of the covenant was made to Abraham... what was once a faint whisper, "Sarai is barren" begins to blare like a siren to drown out the story... "Sarai is barren, having no child." Abraham and Sarah are getting old. They begin concocting their own means of securing the covenant.

Chapter 16 verse 1, Sarai had borne him no children. Let's see what Hagar can do. And we know what happens. Hagar bears a child, Ishmael. At the time, God doesn't say anything to Abram, and 13 more years go by... and just as Abraham begins to think "problem solved, I've got an heir", in Chapter 17, God gets quite a bit more specific in his covenantal promise,

"I will bless (Sarah), and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Um. Yeah. Abraham "laughed" because he was too old for children, and he virtually shouts at God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" And God emphatically says

“No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.”

“no, Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant.” Three times in chapter 17, God tells Abraham, “Sarah will bear you a son, God will give you and son by Sarah, Isaac will be born to Sarah and this set time next year.” Abraham cannot fix the covenant problem. Abraham’s progeny **cannot** and **will not** be through the design of men. When Abraham’s offspring cover the globe there will be no mistaking Who has done this. There will be a birth of a son who cannot be explained any other way than divine intervention.

Which brings us to chapter 18. By now the words of Genesis 11 are screaming through Abraham’s story: *Sarai was barren; she had no child.*

## God comes to feast...in a garden

Chapter 18. Verse 1.

And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. 2 He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth 3 and said, “O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. 4 Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, 5 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.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” 6 And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes.” 7 And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. 8 Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

In the wake of the promise of a son through Sarah, and Abraham’s circumcision of all the males in his household, the LORD appeared. God shows up. Again. Here we find God at work, in a most unusual way. We, the readers are being set up for something spectacular. Something unusual is going on. God doesn’t just appear. God appears to Abraham as three men.

All sorts of questions arise when we consider these opening lines of Chapter 18. Who are the three men? Is this the trinity? Is this God and two angels? Are these simply three men who have been divinely empowered to speak on behalf of God? Does Abraham know who these men are?

None of these questions are really relevant to the story. I tend to think that this is the second person of the Trinity with two angels, especially after two angels are prominent in the next section of the story. It has been popular for some to affirm this as another instance of the Trinity. There is some credence to that view because of the way that the three speak in a unified way in this passage. I don’t think the third option is viable. These three men are clearly identified as God in the first verse.

As for whether Abraham knew, we're not told. What we see is that God appears in the first verse, and it's explained more fully in the second verse. God appears. Abraham notices men standing... and the implication is that something weird is going on. These men were not there one second ago... the word Behold, draws attention to a special appearance.

Most commentators believe Abraham didn't know right away, and that his actions of getting the meal prepared was his hospitality in high gear. I tend to lean with those that Abraham knew something was up... first, because his hospitality is in high gear, and because God himself had already told him in the previous chapter... in a face to face conversation no less, that he would be visiting Sarah and giving her a son.

But it doesn't matter. We like to ask questions that the text is not asking. What we are supposed to see is that God appears to Abraham, and that Abraham responds with a feast. We're supposed to see God eating with Abraham in a scene that's abundant with trees and dazzling with a feast.

God appears in the heat of the day by trees. Trees are mentioned three times in this section. God appears by the trees (verse 1). God rests or reclines near the trees (verse 4). And God ate under the trees (verse 8).

But we don't just see trees. We see feast. These three visitors appear and Abraham is a flurry of activity. Abraham prepares a feast, that even by those day's standards was over the top. Not simply bread, water, and cakes, but milk and a calf. This is a feast for someone who is to be given prominence.

At this table, God rests or reclines. At this point, Moses' readers can hardly contain themselves. God is reclining at table, feasting with his people in a setting flush with trees. Abraham doesn't know it, but if he but looks a bit closer, he will recognize he is serving a covenant meal as God's presence encompasses the setting. Nothing speaks to blessing and prosperity and divine favor more throughout the scriptures than God banqueting with his people.

Something very special indeed is happening there in the trees of Mamre. Moses here is painting a stark contrast between the last chapter. Chapter 17 is a bummer. Abraham and Sarah connive to get the covenantal blessing. God rebukes them and gives them the promise of a son. The sign of the covenant is given, circumcision in imagery of a bloody mess. That sign came with a warning of the covenantal curses that would rain down on those who do not identify with God's people in circumcision. Here we have God taking the initiative. God appears. God is going to fix the problem of Abraham's lack of an heir himself. He comes and feasts among trees that evoke a sense of life, growth, bounty, prosperity, and divine favor.

This is not only a contrast to the debacle with Ishmael and the bloody institution of circumcision, but also the reason for the visit in the first place: Sarah's barrenness. Nothing symbolized the lack of divine favor or famine than for an Israelite woman to be barren. Trees, a feast, the mirth of milk and fatted calf... meant to highlight the importance and meaning of the occasion.

## A laugh at the promise

Which brings us to verse 9

9 They said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “She is in the tent.”  
10 The LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.  
11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?” 13 The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’  
14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.” 15 But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “No, but you did laugh.”

Having reclined at table, and having feasted with his favored people among trees, God gets to the point of his visit. Divine appearance leads to divine intervention: Where is Sarah your wife? The full weight of the question must’ve stunned the two nomads. The question conveys authority. If Abraham doesn’t know or hasn’t caught on to the identity of his visitors, he certainly does now... and so does Sarah. Sarah’s name hasn’t been mentioned by Abraham (at least as far as the text lets on). She seemingly hasn’t been introduced to the visitors, and yet they know her name. By invoking Sarah’s name, this story takes on heightened drama. It is electric. The fuller picture of the occasion for cakes, and milk, and tender steak meat, reclining at table among trees is being brought into view. God is pulling Sarah into the conversation and into the story.

And then God makes the pronouncement he came for, a Promise for the ages, a Promise that reverberates through Israel encamped in the desert as they hear it. There is a promise of a son... a son other than Ishmael. In almost the very same language as he used with Abraham in chapter 17, God again promises Abraham a son through Sarah. Notice the two-fold emphasis... don’t rush over the first part to get to the promise of a Son. Before God says, “Sarah your wife will have a son” he says, “I will surely return.”

What is inseparable from the birth of a son to Sarah is God’s activity and presence. “I will surely return” conveys a sense of personal participation and presence. God’s presence will result in futility. This visit will be at the appointed time. In the appointed time, God will visit Sarah and she will give birth to a son. There will be no son if God is not present... a fact, that is necessitated by what follows. This pronouncement fits the celebratory feasting that set up the announcement. In the lushness of the fruit of the land and the rich substance of a fatted calf, milk, and cakes is an announcement that God himself will make good on the covenant he has promised to Abraham.

Implied here is a clue of what Abraham and Sarah may have suspected all along: Her barrenness was not a quirk of nature. Her barrenness was not a physical abnormality. God had shut the womb to be opened in the fullness of time... for such a time as this.

Such a pronouncement borders on the stupendous. While her barrenness is attributed to divine activity, in the providence of Abraham and Sarah’s lives that barrenness is taken to an entirely different level. Sarah isn’t simply barren, having never given birth to a child. She is beyond barren. The very next sentence places the former announcement in the realm

of the ridiculous. Sarah's age is mentioned more than any other women's age in Scripture. It's a big deal. Sarah was passed the age of child-bearing. Sarah is too old to have kids.

For Abraham and Sarah, the impossibility hangs like a low, chilling cloud over the feast. Yet over against that impossibility, God has just said, "in the appointed time, I will be present among you again, and Sarah will have a son." In fact, it's the impossibility that is precisely God's design. The birth of this promised son defies possibility. The son of promise through whom all of the nations will be blessed over the whole of the earth will be born in a birth that is not of this world. This birth will be other-worldly. It can be no other way. Abraham knows it. Sarah knows it. Israel knows it. The whole world knows it. The advent of this "son" is utterly and completely of God's doing.

And how does Sarah respond to this? A ridiculous proposition elicits an incredulous response. Sarah's response is at the heart of this pronouncement. Sarah laughs. "Sarah laughed to herself". This laugh is one of disbelief, more than likely unbelief. It is not mocking. It is simply taking stock of the impossibility and the ridiculousness of the proposition, all things being equal. The word "laugh" is mentioned four times in these few verses. Laughter is the prominent feature of this text. The laughter contextualizes Sarah's response in light of the grand pronouncement within the feasting among the trees.

God's promise of the birth of a son, in light of its physical impossibility, is met with unbelief, and the unbelief produces a subconscious reflex, a laugh. The pronouncement has pulled out of Sarah a response that cannot be concealed. Her laugh betrays her heart. It's not as if Sarah has not seen God act in miraculous ways on her behalf. God rained down plagues on the Pharaoh in Egypt because of Sarah.

Here, in the presence of the divine, Sarah is at the end of herself, but she refuses to let go of those inner thoughts that assert themselves into the equation. After all, the Hagar thing had been her idea to fix the covenantal heir problem. She may have left Haran with Abraham to go to a land she did not know, followed Abraham as a nomad, but Sarah is not yet ready to concede that God will do this without her help. Her barrenness, for her, has become the identity of her faith. Having attempted and failed to gain the covenant's blessing through illicit means, she cannot see or believe anything but her barren hopelessness. She is walking by sight. What she can physically see with her own eyes and experience in her own, broken-down body, is the extent of her belief.

God is not about to let this pass. Sarah laughs inwardly, but almost immediately it's time for public confession. You see, this entire sequence has been for Sarah's benefit all along. Abraham had already been given the promise in Chapter 17. It is now Sarah's turn. Reclining at table with Abraham under the trees, this pronouncement of a son has in its purview Sarah's heart. God banquets and God promises a son to bring Sarah to the point where she must acknowledge her unbelief.

So... God asks two more questions. Already he has asked "Where is Sarah?" Now he asks: "Why did Sarah laugh?" Only the omniscient, omnipotent God would know this. Her inner, hidden thoughts have been revealed. Her unbelief is no longer a secret. The omniscient God asks a question he already knows the answer to because he wants Sarah to embrace the pronouncement as gospel.

Yes, the pronouncement of a son is gospel. It is salvation. All of redemption is wrapped up in the covenant made with Abraham. If Abraham has no son, God would be a liar. If Abraham has no son, the seed of the woman will never crush the seed of the serpent. But the gospel and its Redeemer and its salvation rides on the impossibility that man can do this. That man can partake in this. So long as Sarah is trying to fix things herself, so long as her hopes lie in the possibility that she herself can bear Abraham a son, there will be no son, there will be no salvation. God has shut her womb, God has allowed her body to become old enough to shut down child-bearing capability. That “all nations will be blessed through Abraham” must rest on God’s design and his work. God himself is going to provide a son.

“Why did Sarah laugh?” Sarah laughed because she doesn’t believe. She believes she’s too old. She believes that the covenant blessings are dependent on what she contributes. Laughter is not the best medicine here. Laughter is Sarah’s subconscious reflection betraying a heart that has not yet embraced the promise of a son, a son through whom will come all of God’s blessings to all of his people...forever.

And that leads us to the third question here. Not only does God pull Sarah’s unbelief to the surface, he presents the underlying issue: Is anything too hard for the LORD? Sarah and Abraham, of course, know the answer to this question. Is anything, including the impossibility of childbirth, impossible for God? The answer must be no. Again, God does not simply state it in a declarative sentence. He is asking a question aimed at helping Sarah see her unbelief.

Of course, nothing is too hard for the LORD. That’s the point. Sarah has been acting as if God needs her help. She’s too old. If not her, then she will substitute Hagar. The covenant promises depend on her. She laughs because her personal contribution is beyond her physical capabilities, capabilities in which she has placed her confidence.

But this self-reliance and the laughter it produces is no small matter. God wants Sarah to see her laughter as an attack on the pronouncement. Having asked the rhetorical question that has an obvious answer, He repeats the promise. If you look at this passage as a whole, at the front of the conversation (vs. 10) and at the back end of this conversation (vs. 14), the promise is repeated twice. Sarah’s laughter is set in contrast with the promise. Here in verse 14, God repeats the promise of a return visit and a son through Sarah. (What’s interesting is that this is precisely what had occurred in chapter 17. God promised a son. Abraham laughed. God reiterated the promise, and in fact, gave the son a name, Isaac.)

God confronts Sarah’s laughter with more gospel. He again promises Abraham (with Sarah obviously listening), “at the appointed time, I will come back to you, I will dwell among you again, and Sarah will have a son.” If only Sarah could see... in the pronouncement there is hope. In the pronouncement there is salvation. This is the meaning of the banquet in an oxygen-rich oasis. Salvation and life are being promised. All Sarah can see is shriveled skin. All she can feel is a body that shut down long ago.

At this point, verse 15, the conversation shifts. Up to this point, the conversation has been with Abraham, and Sarah has been listening in on the conversation. God has repeated his promise, and now, Sarah is no longer in the tent. God’s questions not only put her heart on display. She’s now out in the open. And Sarah responds directly to God, and God answers directly to her.

Sarah's response to this second pronouncement is not what God was looking for. Rather than concede, Sarah doubles down on her unbelief. Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid.

Sarah laughed. And then she compounded the issue by lying about it. The lie cements the laughter as an unbelieving response to the gospel. Sarah is trying to convince herself in her unbelief. At the core of unbelief is a wrong view about who God is and what he does. Her fear is a natural yet fallen reaction to being in the presence of a holy God who doesn't mess around with sin. Her laughter had been hidden, and her desire is that it stay that way. One wonders what Sarah was thinking: If she confesses, does she expect God to strike her dead? Punish her with the kind of curses that fall to someone who doesn't circumcise their male children? Is that her view of God? She protects her laughter, because she's not ready to embrace the pronouncement.

Notice the last part of verse 15. Sarah denies laughing. And then... this scene ends abruptly. This scene underneath the trees of Mamre, with God reclining at table in the presence of his own people with a banquet that is over-the-top in abundance, ends with God no longer speaking about Sarah in the third person. He speaks directly to her and its an indictment that lands like an anvil: "No, but you did laugh."

And that's the end of it. The end of the conversation, the end of the banquet, the end of feasting with God in the sanctuary of Mamre. What a stunning conclusion. This is not the dream ending for a banquet that Hollywood would give us. Hollywood would have stopped the story at the end of the second promise. Yes. A child is coming. A miracle son will be born. There's no more barrenness. Nothing to wait for but the Advent of Isaac.

But that's not how it ends. Sarah is resolute in her self-sufficiency. She and her laugh. "No, but you did laugh." God's gavel lands with such force there is nothing but silence to follow. Once the pronouncement is made, Abraham leaves the tent and the table to walk with God toward Sodom. Sarah is left behind with nothing but a verdict. Laughing in unbelief at the impossibility of the gospel leads to a declaration from the bench, Guilty.

She hangs on to her unbelief, even when presented with the gospel, and God pronounces her guilty. Curtain closed on Sarah. Moses in writing this, wants Israel to feel the gravity of the laughter in the response to the pronouncement. It's an abrupt end. Sarah, alone outside of the tent. Sarah, exposed in her unbelief. Sarah, forced to reckon with a ridiculous impossibility. Sarah is left to ponder the declaration of the gospel. Sarah and her laughter.

## Laughter transformed

And that's the end of the story, right? No. God in his grace doesn't not allow the story to end there. Sarah is one of His own. He will not let her remain in her laughter. He is going to remember Sarah. He will be faithful to his promise, but he will bring Sarah to a place where she embraces the gospel.

There are several of these kinds of promises of a son in the Bible. This is the only one in which the annunciation is separated from the actual birth itself. This annunciation takes place over two chapters, chapter 17 to Abraham, this Promise given in chapter 18, and the fulfillment of the promise occurs in chapter 21. In between, the promise of a son is the



institution of circumcision and the warnings of covenantal curses, and God's divine destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's depravity, and another episode involving Sarah and a king who tries to take her as wife, a pregnant 90-year-old, no less.

The birth of this son, and the salvation and hope bound up in this son, is against the backdrop of human misery and debauchery and rebellion. If you are one of Moses' readers... and the conversation has ended abruptly as it does in verse 15, you begin to wonder if this son will ever be born. Will God make good on his promise? Will God accomplish the impossible? Will Sarah persist in her unbelief?

Into the darkness of human depravity come the absolutely glorious words of Genesis 21:1... **The LORD visited Sarah as he had said.** Here are the echoes of the promise, I will return to you. I will be with you, I will personally see to this, I will dwell among you. My presence is going to accomplish this. **"and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised."**

This is grace. This is wonderful, stupendous grace. Sarah didn't deserve it. Her unbelief deserved condemnation. But God has done it. God has made good on his promise. The impossible has been done. The covenant promises have been rescued from oblivion. Abraham will have a posterity as numerous as the sand on the seashore. God himself has provided an heir to bring to pass all that he had promised, and this includes a posterity that will arrive 2000 years later.

Verse 2 of chapter 21:

**Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. 3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." 7 And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."**

What a difference from chapter 18 to chapter 21. Note the language. This is gospel speech: **"God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me."** Laughter has been redeemed. Laughter has been infused with grace from above. This is no longer the laughter of unbelief. God is the source point, the originator of joy-filled laughter. Sarah gets it now. Sarah's heart has been transformed. No longer is laughter a subconscious revelation of unbelief. This laughter is enriched by and laced with joy. This laughter embraces the gospel. This laughter places its hope in the God who accomplishes the impossible. There is wonder at the Son's birth. There is amazement. There is joy. What was impossible has been accomplished by God. The joy and laughter of salvation have come to this house. The promises made to Abraham regarding his offspring are secure because it is God and God alone who accomplishes this.

Isaac means "he laughs". Isaac as one of Israel's great patriarchs is a reminder that laughter is inseparable from the salvation story. In the midst of human depravity, salvation and hope through the promised son are cause for laughter, merriment, and joy. Yes, the accomplishment of salvation in the atonement is sobering. It is not funny. But this is why we must insist that this kind of laughter produced in salvation through the birth of a son

should not be confused with earthly humor. There is a heavenly origin to this kind of laughter. “God has made laughter for me.” Laughter that is laced with joy has its grounds in the grand and glorious accomplishments of a God who is rich in mercy and abundant in grace.

And this laughter is not a hidden laughter. Sarah not only says “God has made laughter for me”... “everyone who hears will laugh over me.” Everyone or ALL who hear will laugh over me.” ALL who hear. Wherever the good news of the birth of this son is proclaimed, there will be laughter and joy infused into the story because God has accomplished the impossible. Sarah says “all” because she has confidence that God, through a son, will indeed bless all nations of the world. The covenant will be accomplished through a son whose name is “He laughs”.

Wherever these nations are blessed, there will be the proclamation of laughter and joy in the God who accomplished the impossible. A proclamation that highlights God’s goodness in accomplishing for man that which man cannot do must be infused with laughter, and merriment, and banqueting and celebration... the response of the redeemed reclining at table in the presence of God.

## Conclusion

What is our response as the people of God? What does this have to do with Advent?

As we celebrate Advent... Three things to keep in mind:

The miraculous birth of this promised son that could only be accomplished by God has in view another birth of the ultimate promised son, the one who is THE offspring of Abraham. In the advent **we need to see a God who accomplishes the impossible...** our salvation through the birth of a son. Is anything, is the salvation of a people who cannot save themselves, too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time, God paid a visit to a woman in Nazareth. The LORD came to Mary and did for her what He had promised. Who would have told Joseph that Mary would have borne to him a son as a virgin? There in Bethlehem, an impossible son is born, a Son who not only brings to pass all of the covenant blessings, but fulfills the terms of the covenant as a covenant to his people. Through this New Isaac born in a Bethlehem manger all people groups of the world are blessed as recipients of a grand and glorious salvation. Is anything too hard for the LORD?

The second thing we need to consider in the Advent season is that we must see ourselves behind the tent curtain, laughing in unbelief in need of transformation. We are the laughers who are self-reliant, convinced that we can save ourselves, by any and all means. We are convinced God needs our help. Confronted with the impossible, we laugh... unconvinced that Christ really has accomplished all things for our salvation on our behalf. We are in desperate need of the God who comes to feast and dine with his people, even as he confronts our self-reliance. We are in constant need of a gospel that tells us “God will do this and has done this through a Son, Jesus.”

The last thing we need to consider is that Advent is a time to rejoice at Christ’s accomplishment of the impossible. Our laughter has been infused with grace. It has been redeemed. At the appointed time, God visited us. Emmanuel has come to dwell among His people. We must see ourselves as the people of God who say, “In the birth of a Son God has accomplished an impossible salvation for us.” In the impossible, God has made laughter for us. Our laughter and merriment over what Christ has done for us is other-

worldly. Our salvation is reason for a joy-filled laughter and merriment because God has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. Our salvation is ridiculous. Our salvation is stupendous.

Abraham “laughed” to see Christ’s day, and he saw it and was glad. Is that us? Is the gospel cause for laughter and celebration? Does grace produce within us a wellspring of joy-enriched laughter? As we consider the birth of the New Isaac, and we remember all that He has accomplished for us on our behalf, may we be people of laughter.

As we feast, this Advent season, feast greatly. As we laugh, laugh heartily. If a stranger were to see us and ask, why do you laugh? The answer must be: because Christ has accomplished the impossible for us. Sons? Heirs? Are you kidding me? Only God could do this. Christ has made laughter for his people, people who laugh because He has accomplished the impossible.

Is anything, absolutely anything, too hard for Jesus? May we renounce all of our self-sufficiency and find joy and merriment in a Christ who has accomplished an impossible salvation for those who could not.