



*Listen to the silence
let it enfold you,
like a piece of music,
like bird-watching.*

—Esther de Waal

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST 14 June 2020

Invitation to Prayer

That you may receive God's hospitality, remove as best as you are able any distractions.

*This might include finding a quiet space free from interruption,
removing clutter from the area, turning off your phone and other electronic devices.
Also, it can be helpful to take a few moments to free your mind of worries and tasks,
relinquishing all things into God's care for a time
so your heart and mind can come fully into God's presence.*

Gathering Prayer — from *Circles of Grace* by Keri Wehlander, adapted

In this moment, O God,
I turn to you.

May the ebb and flow of my thinking
settle into stillness.

May the heaviness within me
be released into your love.

May the cycle of my breathing
restore a spaciousness within.

Come to me, Spirit of Life, create space in me
to listen deeply,
to encounter,
to dwell with you.

Scripture Reading—Genesis 18:1–15

This reading follows the style of a typical annunciation scene in scripture—a visitor or visitors come with a message of an extraordinary birth. In contrast to most annunciation accounts, the mother-to-be, Sarah, hears of her impending pregnancy indirectly by eavesdropping on the conversation between the messengers and her husband Abraham.

Nevertheless, Sarah has a part to play since holy consummation depends upon a willing response, for God's love is not coercive. Or as Joan Chittister puts it, "Hospitality is not simply a matter of opening the door; it is a matter of opening the heart."



As you read this story, take time to let it develop in your imagination by pausing to engage with Abraham and Sarah in the places indicated.

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.

Imagine you are Abraham. How do you respond?

When Abraham saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, "My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little 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."

And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes."

Imagine you are Sarah. How do you respond?

Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it.

Then Abraham 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.

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.

Imagine you are Sarah. How do you respond?

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." But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

Going Deeper

Each of us brings our experiences, our history, and our present reality to scripture. This is our part of the conversation with the Spirit who speaks through the words and in between the lines. Recall your responses as you took Abraham and Sarah's place in your imagination.

- What, if anything, is revealed in your responses?

Hospitality is a significant theme in scripture. In the desert environment of Abraham and Sarah, it was a matter of life and death. In the Hebrew, the word "fetch" is used four times and the word "hurry" three times in rapid succession.

- What do you notice about the hospitality shown in this story?
- How does this encourage you or give insight?

When Abraham first hears that he and Sarah will bear a child in chapter 17, he laughs. In this story, Sarah has the same response. Then, in chapter 21 when their son is born, Sarah laughs with joy. The name of their son, Isaac, means laughter in Hebrew. Consider these two quotes about joy:

Joy is the most infallible sign
of the presence of God.

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Joy has no name. It's very being is lost in the
great tide of selfless delight—creation's
response to the infinite loving of God.

—Evelyn Underhill

- In what ways do these quotes resonate with your experience?
- When is the last time you laughed heartily and what life did it bring to you?

Silent Meditation

You might choose to spend some moments in silent meditation.

How to meditate—from the World Community for Christian Meditation

To meditate, sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer-phrase, "Ma-ra-na-tha." Say it as four syllables of equal length.

Listen to it as you say it, gently but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything—spiritual or otherwise. If thoughts and images come, these are distractions at the time of meditation, so keep returning simply to saying the word.

Prayers of Intercession

Welcoming God, in this wintery season, you spread before us a bounty of earthly delights—brisk morning air, warming sun, splashes of colour in gardens, crashing waves on rocky shorelines, and long nights for quiet activity and rest. Thank you for your love to us and all creation.

We pray for those for whom this season is bitter and harsh, for those who are victimised by systemic injustice, for those who wait in desperation of anger for a new day to dawn...

In your great love: *receive the yearning of our heart.*

We pray for the easing of restrictions happening close to home and in our own country. Now and in the future, may we work together to keep each other safe; may we work together to build communities of equality, justice and neighbourly concern...

In your great love: *receive the yearning of our heart.*

We pray for those near and dear to our heart and for ourselves...

In your great love: *receive the yearning of our heart.*

Disciples' Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

Blessing — Guatemalan song

The peace of the earth be with you,
The peace of the heavens too;
The peace of the rivers be with you,
The peace of the oceans too.
Deep peace falling over you;
God's peace growing in you.

The love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ and the communion of the Spirit be with us all.