WORSHIP SHEETS

Reflections for Ordinary Mystics

Title: And Sarah Laughed

Scripture: Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7 and Psalm 30 [General Use]

Our story opens with Abraham and Sarah relaxing in their tent under the great Oaks of Mamre. Oak trees offered shade and were the place where people gather to sort out public affairs, hold court, and make sacrifices. Under the Oak tree is a thin place where God seems most present.

Here Abraham and Sarah wait. God made a promise that they would be the father and mother of a "Great Family," as many as the stars in the sky and grains of sand in the desert. When that promise was given, Abraham laughed. He and Sarah were old, and God's promise seemed impossible. They grew older together holding this promise … and there was no baby.

Then, three Visitors emerge out of the desert haze. The old couple respond generously with the hospitality of the day. Bread. Water. And a fatted calf. During the party, the promise is again raised when the visitors declare they will return next year to see the first child.

And Sarah laughs. And laughs. And laughs.
Why did Sarah laugh?

Her longing, her grief, her hurt, her fear, her desire, her anger, her pain
is released in one gasp of laughter from her deepest self.

This laughter is a natural, human, faith-filled response to the human spiritual journey.

It is not the laughter that is an escape from reality,
It is not the laughter that is a diversion from all that disturbs us,
It is not the laughter that is mere entertainment

It is a profound laugher from our deepest self,
profound laughter from that thin place
that helps us face realities,
that gives us new perspective,
that takes the power away from suffering.

That laughter. You know it. I know you all do.
It is the laughter that lightens the burden of grief.
It is the laughter that helps hold the absurd.
It is he laughter that came when we said, *if we didn't laugh, we would have cried.*
You know that laughter? This is Sarah's laughter.

This laughter is a stubborn affirmation of faith.
This laughter kindles the courage to keep us in relationship with God and one another.

Just when everything seems impossible,
just when we have no imagination left,
just when we cannot see a way forward, then laughter opens the way.
Life opens in a new way that seems impossible. Laughter opens our heart.
Laugher brings us deeper into faith. Laughter is the gift of God.

When Sarah laughed at the promise the visitors would return to see a baby,
they asked why she laughed. Sarah denied she laughed. Perhaps she was afraid:
"I didn't laugh," she said.
"Yes, you did," they said.

The laugher from our deepest selves can embarrass us; we can be a little afraid of it.
It is a laughter that often doesn't make sense.
It is a laughter that knows before knowing. It is a laughter that delivers the impossible.
It is laughter that is God's work in us,
and we only get it when we hold it in our arms, like the miracle it is.

Sarah laughed. Sometime later a baby was born. And Sarah and Abraham laughed again and decided to call the baby, Isaac, a word in their language that means, "Laughter."

The Psalmist says, "Weeping may last for the night…"
and there is plenty weeping in our world.
We need only to recall the news of this week: *(You can list news stories that make you weep.)*
You have weeping in your lives and in your prayers, your own tears.

"Weeping may last for the night, and joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30, NRSV)

This joy is the laughter that shortens the distance between God and us.
Our suffering, our broken hearts, our despair at the world, our fear of the future,
our barren spirits, our suffering body, and anguished soul, we do not bear it alone.

God's promise, God's Presence is held within the Ultimate Laugh,
the resurrection of Jesus, the rising of Presence, God's promise, and response.
This changes everything.

"Weeping may last for the night, and [laugher] comes in the morning."

Sarah's laughter is a gift, the thin place of faith
and in this laughter, we rest and trust. AMEN.