

## **Devotion for the week leading to the 14th of June 2020**

*This service is written for Stretton Park and McDonald Wing in Maffra, Laurina Lodge in Heyfield and Royal Freemason's in Sale, but with the intention of being available for any who are interested for their private use.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This week we continue in the Book of Genesis, picking up the story of Abraham and his wife Sarah. It is a story about laughter, Sarah's scoffing laughter at the thought of having a child in her old age, and then her joyful laughter after the birth of her son Isaac

**HYMN No. 27** - I am so glad that Jesus loves me

*You can read the words to yourself, or out loud. If you remember the tune well enough you can sing it yourself. You can, of course sing just the first, or the first and last verses.*

**BIBLE READING** - Our New Testament reading comes from Romans chapter 5, verses 1 to 8. St. Paul writes that we are justified by faith and are at peace with God. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us, even while we were still ungodly.

### **PRAYER**

We thank you O God for Jesus; His life, His work and His teaching. Thank you that He made us right before you, even before we knew we needed to become right before you. All of the things we have ever done wrong are taken away, by faith. Even those things we may have done before we knew you are no longer held against us. Lord God, help us to accept this forgiveness so that the past no longer worries us, and our hearts are set free. This we pray in Jesus name, Amen

**OLD TESTAMENT READING** - Genesis 18 : 1 - 15 & 21 : 1 - 7

When Abraham had set up camp, three strangers came to his tent. He offered them hospitality, then God told Abraham that his wife Sarah would have a son within a year. Sarah laughed when she heard it because she was too old to have children, but when she was asked, she denied that she had laughed. Sarah did become pregnant and had a son and they named him Isaac. Sarah later said, now God has bought me laughter and people who hear of this will laugh with me.

**HYMN No.4** - Have thine own way

### **REFLECTION**

Sometimes we laugh at things because they are unusual or strange or uncomfortable. Sometimes we laugh because we are happy. We can laugh with someone and share their happiness and joy. Sometimes we might laugh at someone, showing that they made us uncomfortable, or that we think they are strange or we don't believe what they have told us.

Sarah laughed at the thought of having a baby. She did not believe it, she knew she was too old, and just talking about it probably made her feel uncomfortable. Other women had probably laughed at her because she did not have any children. Her laugh was actually scoffing at God, showing that she did not believe that God could make a child happen for her. But, in time, she found herself pregnant with what we might call a 'change of life' baby. In those days, a woman's value was seen in the children she produced, so she could now see herself as a real woman of value.

This child would be the heir to Abraham's large estate, it would continue her line and it gave her a place in the history of her people. It must have also made her look at her faith in God and see a God who really could do anything. She was turned from a woman scoffing in dis-belief, into a woman laughing in joyful fulfilment.

Our laughter is often a fairly automatic reaction, but as much as possible we need to guard ourselves where we can, to hold ourselves back and not laugh at people who are trying to do their best in a situation we may see as strange. Having someone laugh at your best efforts can be humiliating. On the other hand, joining with someone in joyful laughter can make a good time much better. Always try to make your laughter supportive of other people, in that way you will both enjoy each other's company so much more.

HYMN No.32 - Jesus wants me for a sunbeam

#### PRAYER

God our Father, help us to be the sort of people you would have us be. Help us to be supportive and helpful towards others, and not put others down. Help us to enjoy the time we spend with our friends and make our conversations happy and joyful. We pray for all those people who are trying to make the world a better place. We pray for comedians, that their jests might have truths that make us think about things as well as being funny. Please help those people who try to make our lives more enjoyable and hopeful. Lastly, we pray for those we care for, our friends and our families who are still facing the challenges of the virus. We bring all these concerns to you, along with the concerns of our own hearts.

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, For ever and ever, AMEN

HYMN No 16 - To God be the glory, great things He has done

#### The BLESSING

May God the creator of life, bring you love, peace and joy.

And may the blessing of the almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

be upon you and remain with you always, Amen