

## Don't Make Me Laugh

### *The Gospel According to Abraham, Pt. 5*

What we're doing at the tale end of summer is we're looking at the stories of Abraham's life, which we read in the book of Genesis. And the one we get to today is really about laughter. We have the saying, "laughter is the best medicine." Well, don't replace your blood pressure script with stand-up comedy *just* yet. But the science is real.

Study after study shows that laughter lowers cortisol – the stress hormone – while simultaneously releasing more of the "feel good" neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin. Not to mention endorphins which have pain-relieving effects. In 2020, a group of Brazilian and Canadian researchers conducted 21 separate studies on the impact of hospital clowns on more than 1,600 children and adolescents suffering an array of symptoms. The research found that children exposed to clowns were significantly less anxious during subsequent medical procedures. Although I'm sure those dozen or so kids who are terrified of clowns fared *less* well.

So we're going to see a text this morning that explicitly states that God *brings* laughter. Actually, God transformed a key character's bitter, cynical laughter into a real joy. And I want to show you how God can do that for all of us as well. So let's read the text and then we will explore what it has to teach us for a bit.

We are in **Genesis 18:6–15**; and then, like last week, we'll drop down to Chapter 21 for the rest of the story. To set the scene, Abraham and Sarah have company. Three mysterious visitors show up and the couple scramble to provide hospitality. That's where we'll pick up the story in verse 6.

*"So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread." 7 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. 8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.*

*9 "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said. 10 Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. 11 Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.*

*12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?" 13 Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son." 15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."*

Then starting with the first verse of **chapter 21**; “*Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. 2 Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. 3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. 4 When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him.*

*5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” 7 And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”*

As Sarah says, “God has I *brought* me laughter...” Now *how* can that happen? How can God give you that kind of permanent deep joy everybody really needs? And the answer to the question will be emerge as we look at this narrative in which God comes into Sarah’s life. God comes to Sarah. And let’s notice these four things. Let’s notice *that* God comes to Sarah, *how* God comes to Sarah, *why* God comes to Sarah, and how God can come *to us*.

First of all, **God comes to Sarah**. Background. God has said to Abraham, “I am going to make a new people and a new society out of your descendants, and out of them will come the salvation of the whole world, and therefore, I will give your wife Sarah a son.” But the promise was 25 years ago, and they’re getting older and older. The years go by and the years go by. By now, Sarah is in her 90s and Abraham is 100.

And one day these three strangers come to the tent of Abraham. Three wanderers. Three travelers. It’s the Lord and two angels, though that is not immediately apparent. And the first thing Abraham does, like a good bedouin, is he offers hospitality. You can see in the very beginning of the passage, Abraham and Sarah rushing around. Why?

Because in those days hospitality was considered the *highest* duty, a sacred virtue. When travelers came, you did *everything* to make them at home, to have them rest their weary feet and refresh themselves. And we see Abraham takes these three figures, and he is feeding them outside the tent. Sarah is in the tent, just inside the flap, listening to the conversation. And then, **v. 10**, one reveals himself as the Lord and he says, “~~Then the LORD said,~~ ‘I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.’”

Now, *why* has the Lord come? This is an amazing thing. The Lord is visibly appearing. Why has the Lord come? And the answer is He has come for Sarah. He has *not* come for Abraham. He has not come to speak to Abraham. He has come for Sarah. And that is evident in a number of ways. Notice verse 10 starts with the word “then”. You see, they asked, “Where is your wife Sarah?” Abraham says, “She’s right there, listening.” Verse 10. “**Then** the Lord said...” The Lord’s message was for *Sarah* to hear.

Not only that, as you can see from then on, all the way through the passage, all the interaction is not between Abraham and God; it’s between *Sarah* and God. And besides that, God has already appeared to Abraham - He has also spoken audibly to Abraham. And He has given this promise over and over and over again. God is here - not for Abraham - He’s here for Sarah.

But *why* has God come for Sarah? That’s a good question, because you know, this is not new information that Sarah does not already have. Sarah knows all about this God. Sarah knows all about this promise. God is not saying one single thing here that Sarah hadn’t already heard through Abraham. So why is God going to the trouble of appearing again? And the answer is, and this is our first point, It’s not good enough to know God **through somebody else**.

Sarah believes *in* God, but she doesn’t really believe *God*. She knows *about* God, but she doesn’t *know* God. Everything she knows about God has been through Abraham, and that’s not good enough. You have to have your own encounter. You have to have your *own* dialogue. You have to have your *own* experience of God. You can’t do it through somebody else.

I’ll give you an example. John Stott was a very prominent Anglican priest and theologian. He died about a decade ago. But I read about his conversation experience, he was actually sharing it in one of his talks. And he said that as a young man, he read his Bible every day, he prayed every day, he went to church every Sunday, but it wasn’t until he was 17 years old or so that he was listening to a minister preach and he heard this verse, **Revelation 3:20**.

*“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”*

And here’s what Stott says. “This verse was exactly what I needed to know, for I had believed in Jesus all my life. I had been around Jesus all my life, but I realized he was on the outside, on the wrong side of the door. I said my prayers every day, but through the keyhole, as it were, hoping he heard. But that night, 13 February 1938, when the others were in bed and the lights were out, I crept out of bed, and I knelt, and as simply as I knew how, I opened the door.”

What is that? Like Sarah, he *knew* all about this God, he read his Bible all the time, he prayed all the time, he went to church all the time, but he realized he had never had a personal encounter. Jesus was, as it were, on the outside of the door. He had never made him central. He had never brought him in, and so he opened the door. What does that mean?

Let me just leave it with this. It's not enough for you to know about God, you must have a personal experience of Him. And especially, it's not enough to try to relate to God through somebody else. You may have in your life someone who has had a personal encounter with God – a spouse, a family member, a friend.

And this person is always trying to get you to read the Bible, trying to get you to come to church. Maybe, this person is the reason you are sitting here in church this morning. And if somebody asked you, “Do you believe in Christianity?” you'd say, “Sure, I believe it...maybe not as intensely as my companion here, but I believe it.”

But maybe that person has actually met God and you haven't. It's not a matter of degree. The person may not just be more *religious*. The person may have actually come to open the door. You must open the door too. Sarah gets this visit from God, not to give her new information - she already *had* the

information! - but to have a personal encounter with God Himself. *You* have to have one. Nothing else is sufficient. So first we see *that* God came for her.

Secondly, we see **How God comes to Sarah**. And what's so interesting here, the manner in which God comes. If you contrast the way God comes to see Sarah with the only other time He appears to Abraham in Genesis, which is Genesis 15 - we looked at it a couple of weeks ago - some of you probably were here, but if not, let me give you the background.

There couldn't be two more amazingly *different* appearances of God. In Genesis 15, God comes in *darkness*, when the sun goes down. Here He's at bright noonday. In Genesis 15, He appears as a smoking torch and a blazing pot moving through pieces of dead animals. Here you have a guy with sore feet, who is so accessible and familiar they don't even know it's God for a long time.

In Genesis 15, even before God shows up, Abraham felt this crushing dread, but here it's so gentle. And look how gentle God is. Sarah laughs, and by the way, when Sarah laughs, the thing she says is much more self-hating and bitter and despondent than it looks on the surface. (v. 12) “*So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, ‘After I am **worn out** and my master is old, will I now **have this pleasure?**’*”

Now the term “worn out” is a word that means “useless, good for nothing.” A *very* negative word. A very self-hating word. But the word for “pleasure” is not what you might think either. The normal reader reads this and thinks what she is saying is, “After I’m this old, will I have now the pleasure of having this child?” And of course, if you think it’s *pleasant* to have a child, you’re a man. Besides, that’s simply not what the word means. The Hebrew word here is a word that means sexual pleasure, and this is what she’s saying, just to see how despondent she is.

She says, “I am utterly worn out. We’re not even having sex. My husband hasn’t touched me in years...and I’m going to have a son?” It’s self-disdaining as well as disdaining the promise of God. And how does God react? This is so different than the dramatic, fiery, awesome voice out of the fiery pot saying, “I am the Lord!”

Here you have God so gentle. What does God say to her when she laughs at Him? She *laughs* at the Lord of the universe! What does He say? “How dare you laugh at me you little humanoid speck? I am the Lord?” No. What does He say? All the commentators notice when He restates her objection, He edits out all of the self-hating terminology. He will not repeat the nasty things she says about herself.

Look at v.13, “*Then the LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’*” That’s not what she said. It comes across even more clearly in the Hebrew. But she didn’t say anything *near* that nice. But God gently restates it, edits out all the nasty terminology, won’t affirm her self-loathing, and then just reassures her. He says, “I *will* come back.” Amazing. And when she continues to lie and she says, “I didn’t laugh,” what does He do? He doesn’t explode. He almost smiles. You can almost hear His smile when He says, “Oh, but you did.”

What is God doing saying, “Oh, you did. Gotcha”? You cannot imagine two more *different* appearances. What’s going on here? Why would God be so different with Sarah and Abraham? Well, just like Patrick Swayze learned nobody puts baby in a corner...well nobody puts God in a box. And God doesn’t put *you* in a box. God does not work off a template. God does not have a behavioral matrix – “ok, here’s the college-educated Italian extrovert script.” God’s canvas is not paint-by-numbers.

There are infinite varieties in the way in which God comes into people’s lives, and you have to be very careful about how you interpret spiritual progress. I know sometimes, for example, God acts very dramatically, suddenly. Sometimes God works very naturally and gradually in a process. Sometimes there’s a big immediate change between your life before and after your Christianity. Sometimes the change is much more gradual.

And the way we *meet* God is very different as well. I mean it's always through Christ, but the motivations for opening the door and the responses once it's opened can be very different. Everybody who meets God personally has to have an *experience* of their need and weakness, and an *experience* of His love and provision. But which comes first?

See, a lot of people have come through the need-and-weakness door. They get filled with conviction of sin, and only later do they experience any of God's love and grace. Other people come in through the gentle door, the door that just assures them of love and acceptance, and only later on do they begin to see the depths of their brokenness and sinfulness, and so forth.

This is the point. Do not worry that your Christian experience has to **emulate or imitate** somebody else's, and don't too quickly project *your own* experience and journey on somebody else and say, "Well, you're not a real Christian unless..." Be careful. Isn't it amazing how many different ways God can show up, how diverse God is in His dealings with humanity?

And here's one other great thing to point out. Do you notice when she says, "I didn't laugh," and He says, "Oh, but you did ..." What a wonderful Counselor! Don't be afraid to tell God the truth. Don't be afraid to show God your weaknesses, your doubts, and your struggles. Don't be afraid. He's not going to blow up at you. And here's another way to apply this verse.

If somebody is deceiving you, if somebody has been lying to you, don't blow up at *them*. If the God of the universe isn't insulted when somebody lies to Him, why in the world do you think *you* have a right to be? Wonderful Counselor. Receive this wonderful counsel. Imitate this wonderful counsel. So, we see *that* God came to her, we see *how* God came to her.

**But thirdly, we discover Why God came to Sarah.** And here's why, and this is the heart of the narrative. God came to *transform her laughter*. In some ways the heart, not the climax, but the essence and the heart of the narrative, is two statements in verses 13 and 14. In verse 13, God says, "Why did Sarah laugh like that? Why did she disdain herself and me? Why is her laughter so bitter and cynical and skeptical?" And then, He gives the answer.

Now it's in the form of a question in **verse 14**, but it's actually the answer. It's the diagnosis, it's the explanation, for why Sarah is the way she is. And He says, "*Is anything too hard for the LORD?*" But the Hebrew word he uses there literally is the word for "wonder". It's the word you see over and over and over and over again in the Psalms, where it says, "Tell of His wonders. Be in awe about His wonders, His great and mighty deeds." God literally says, "Is anything too *wonderful* for Me?"

And here's what He's saying. Sarah is filled with disdain and filled with bitter, cynical laughter because her laughter is devoid of *wonder*. And this is so relevant to the cynical, jaded age in which we live. So many comedians tell their jokes through a sneer – and I watch them too. They make me laugh, hey, it's a dark world. It's coping mechanism, I get it. But that's one of the things I appreciated about Pee-Wee Herman – Paul Reubens just died – he could instill a childlike sense of fun and wonder. John Stott and Pee-Wee Herman, get you a pastor who can do both!

Now what is wonder? That's a hard thing to define. But nobody has described it better than G.K. Chesterton in his very famous essay called "The Ethics of Elfland." In it he talks about how the things he believe most are the things he learned in nursery school. If you stand back and look at children, they're actually having a fairly good time. And the reason why is that their life is filled with wonder. The more wonder you have in your life, the more your life is meaningful. It takes *nothing* to get a kid filled with wonder.

He's talking about how important fairy tales are for our adult soul, but he says this, "When we are very young children we do not need fairy tales: we only need tales. Mere life is interesting enough. A child of seven is excited by being told that Tommy opened a

door and saw a dragon. But a child of three is excited about being told that Tommy opened a door." Have you ever played peek-a-boo with an infant? Chris Rock doesn't get laughs like that!

But as Chesterton points out, that wears off. And the older you get, the harder and harder it is to fill the heart with wonder. Things that used to excite us, we get bored with. And we call that progress, maturity. What if it's just a progressive *dying* on the inside to match what's happening on the outside? We all become the grumpy old man if we don't intentionally fight it. It gets harder and harder to fill the heart with wonder, and that's bad, because without wonder you've run out of meaning in life.

But we have something else going on in *our* world, in our Western culture. We live in perhaps the most wonder-killing worldview, the most wonder-killing culture, that has ever existed. What they'll tell you in most of the major universities of the world, in almost every department, is if you experience love or beauty, that's really a chemical reaction, that's just how you're wired, that's evolutionary biology. They'll tell you every claim of truth and morality and justice and right or wrong is socially constructed; it's basically a power play. Nothing is more wonder-killing than that.

So how do we live? Because you can't live without wonder. You can't! And G.K. Chesterton's answer is, we have to have wonder, so what we do is we *steal* it through art. Our worldview doesn't have it anymore, so we steal it through art. Through stories mainly - through books and through literature and through plays and through movies and things like that. And *momentarily* we have wonder, especially if the story has these three elements - he says there are three elements that particularly fill you with wonder if the story has them.

First, the stories have to show you there are stupendous mysterious *powers* out there beyond the here and now that you can see and taste and touch and smell. Secondly, the story brings us into a situation of *doom* in which our prospects are impossible and hopeless. But then Thirdly, there's a heroic *key* that unlocks the barrier between those powers and your situation and brings those powers into the impossible situation and there's resolution, there's redemption, there's rescue, there's salvation.

And you know what? I just read you the template to every Marvel Superhero movie ever made - just add CGI. But it's *so* many of the stories. We jaded, contemporary Western people go to the stupidest summer blockbuster movies - poorly acted, terrible character development, nothing but special effects -

and we lay our money down because they always have those three elements. And afterwards, we make fun of them and we roll our eyes, but in the middle of darkened theatre...your hearts are racing. We need that wonder. But it's fleeting.

And so do you know what I think is beyond the stunning resurgence of popularity in fantasy and science fiction these days? At the end of millennium, these mediums weren't making money by and large - not like they are today. Few people remember what a huge gamble the *Lord of the Rings* films were. But now you have Marvel, Harry Potter, Game of Thrones, on and on.

I think there's a spiritual answer...of course, that's why we do God at the Movies. You see, I think the popularity may be because, in spite of what your intellect tells you, your heart knows this world is not all there is, and every good story tells you there are mysterious, stupendous powers out there that can come into our impossible situation. Your heart knows it, though your intellect denies it, and the stories assure you and give you some relief and fill you with wonder.



But Hollywood is only ever going to be able to give us a taste. A drug that loses its potency with every subsequent hit. But in the Bible, the gospel is this; God comes and says, “I have a story for you that’s the ultimate story because it’s *true*, and if you believe it, your whole life will be permeated with wonder. A wonder that *lasts*, a wonder that doesn’t just wear off as you’re driving home from the movie, a wonder that will completely *fill* your life in every area with meaning.”

And what is that story? Well, God gets to Sarah and transforms that laughter by putting wonder into it. Look at what she says in **21:6**, near the end. Sarah says, “*God has brought me laughter...*” Well, what do you mean “brought me laughter”? Wasn’t she already laughing? Wasn’t that the whole point? She’s been laughing all of her life. She was laughing earlier. What does it mean “brought me laughter”?

The fact that she can talk about the laughter she’s doing now is something that has been *brought* to her means, “I have a laughter now I never had before.” It’s not the bitter, cynical laughter; it’s a laughter filled with wonder. And where did the wonder come from? **Genesis 21:1**, “*Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said...*” The grace of God came into her life. The grace of God overcame the impossibility of her situation.

You see, she knew there were powers out there, but she didn’t see how they could possibly come in, and through the son of promise, through Isaac - whose name *means* “laughter” - there was the key that brought the power into the impossibility of her situation, and she laughed. Why? Because she now has the laughter of grace.

Without wonder, there’s the cynical, bitter laughter that tries to get rid of despondency, or there’s the nervous laughter that tries to get rid of anxiety. There’s a meme I think about all the time that comes from *The Simpsons* and little Ralph Wiggum is sitting all alone in the back of a school bus that is being hijacked and driven in a very reckless manner. And he just has this grin on his face and says, “Heh-heh, I’m in danger!” We use cynical laughter as a coping mechanism – like Sarah did.

But the laughter of grace says God has overcome the impossible situation with *His* power. She’s *wondering* at it. Her life is filled with wonder, and therefore, she has a new laughter. So new, that she can say, “I’m now laughing in a way I never was before.” So she now has the joy she was lacking. Her whole life has changed. The wonder is there.

So how can we get that joy? Isn't that the question? How can this joy come into our lives? That's the **fourth** and final point, **How God comes to us**. And here's a major mistake people make. And many times preachers and motivational speakers are complicit in it. There is a way to preach this text – and maybe you've encountered it – that says, “Let me tell you what you need to do. Sarah was 90, but she wanted a child, and she got it, and therefore, if we *really* believe, if we *really* pray, if we really *trust* God, the God who says, ‘*Nothing* is impossible with me,’ if we *really* pray and trust then we shouldn't settle for such low expectations and low goals. We should go for *impossible* things.”

By the way, usually when you hear this, you're about to be asked to invest your money in some way. “Let's expect amazing things in our lives. You have a desire for some incredible accomplishment in your life, you have an agenda for your life that's almost too great to imagine...do it! Pray. Ask God for these great things, and God will bring impossible things into your life! For the low low price of...”. Is that how you apply this story? “Dream bigger. Sarah had an impossible dream but through the power of God she got it. And you can too if you'll just...”. No. Because that's making a logical mistake and it's making an exegetical mistake.

The logical mistake is this; the greatest person who ever lived in the history of the world, whose prayer life was considerably better than yours ever will be, and whose faith was unbelievably greater than yours ever will be, had a horrible life. He had a *terrible* life. He didn't have a comfortable life. He had his prayers turned down. He was abandoned by his friends. So you think somehow you're going to do better?

Besides that, it's an exegetical mistake. Does this text teach us that if we believe like Sarah, God can do incredible things? Sarah doesn't believe! That's the point of the text! Where's this great belief? Do you see Sarah down on her knees saying, “O Lord...”? No. Sarah is laughing. God comes down...How many people in the history of the world get God appearing to them? She has one chance. She laughs in His face.

So of course, if we're going to apply the text like this, “Sarah had this incredible goal. It was an impossible goal, and you can have the goal too...” So how should we get these great things in our lives? We should laugh at God? No, I don't think so. The heroic key, the thing that unlocked the door, that brought the power of God into her life, was not her faith - she didn't *have* any - it was the son of promise born into her life and into the world through the grace of God.

Do you remember I said a minute ago what God offers in the Bible is the *ultimate* story, the story in which all other stories are based, the fictional stories that give you wonder for a little bit but no adult heart can seem to really hold onto that? God says, “I have a story, which is the ultimate story. It’s a true story, and if you believe it and take it into your life, it will fill you with a non-naive wonder. It’ll make you *childlike*, but not *childish*.”

Is *this* the story? Is it the story of Abraham and Isaac and of Sarah? No. This story *points* to the story that can do that. Do you know where that story is? Do you know what that story is? Luke knew. Because when you come to the gospel of Luke and you come to chapter 1, the famous place of the annunciation, Luke deliberately shows us something.

Luke shows us an angel who, centuries later, shows up to another woman. And the angel says to *this* woman, “You will bear a child. You will have a son.” And this woman, centuries later, says, “How can this be?” which is pretty much a laugh. An angel shows up, centuries later - just like we’ve read here - says to this woman, “You will have a son,” and this woman is as skeptical as Sarah was.

And do you know why this woman was as skeptical as Sarah? Because if you think it was impossible for Sarah to have a son with an *old* husband, how much more impossible was it for Mary to have a son, as the angel said she would, with *no* husband at all? And when Mary says to the angel, “How can this be?” the angel says, incredibly enough, in **Luke 1:37 ESV** “*For nothing will be impossible with God.*”

Why does Luke deliberately show us the exact parallel between the birth of Jesus and the birth of Isaac? Why does the angel say the very same thing to Mary that he said to Sarah? Do you know why? Because Jesus is the *true* Isaac. Jesus is the ultimate Son of Promise. Jesus is the ultimate one in whom we hear the laughter of God’s grace triumphing over the impossibilities of our situation, because our situation is *far* worse than Sarah’s. Don’t you understand?

Don’t look at Sarah and say, “Well, if you’re 90 years old and you want a baby, let’s just pray to God for it.” Don’t you understand? There’s something *far* greater being promised here. Not infertility. That’s essentially not all that impossible a thing – medical science makes progress all the time. The ultimate Isaac, Jesus, comes in to deal with sin and death itself.

Let me tell you what's impossible...that you and I should live forever. That's a little more than having a baby when you're 90. Let me tell you what's impossible...that you and I, in spite of the way in which we live, would be adopted into the family of God. And yet that's exactly what happens through Jesus Christ, the ultimate Isaac, the ultimate Son of Laughter. Why? How did Jesus do such a thing?

I'll tell you why. The Bible tells us Jesus Christ lived in a heavenly world of laughter. John 1, and many places say the Son was in the bosom of the Father. And of course, that's metaphorical and kind of mysterious, but what it means is the Father and the Son rejoice in each other through all eternity. They delight in each other.

Jesus was living in a world of laughter, but he came into this world and he became a man of sorrows. He was always weeping. And on the cross, he cried out and he was forsaken. Why? I'll tell you why. Jesus Christ *lost* the divine laughter and *received* the sorrow and the mourning and the weeping and gnashing of teeth we deserve so that we could have the laughter. He took our place. *He* took the condemnation for our sin so we could have forgiveness. *He* took our death so we could have life. And *that's* the story.

C.S. Lewis essentially summarizes the story this way. "A cleft has opened in the pitiless walls of the world, and we are invited to follow our great Captain inside." (*The Weight of Glory*, 45) Forget Captain America, Jesus Christ is the Captain of all creation – all things seen and unseen. The heroic death and resurrection of Christ have, in a sense, punched a hole in that huge barrier between the glory of God and our impossible situation, and now in comes everything we need.

And *that* is the one story because it's a *true* story. Jesus is the ultimate Prince who kisses us Sleeping Beauties. Jesus is the ultimate Saint George who slays the dragon. Jesus is the ultimate Hero who dies to save the world or the universe or the city or the neighborhood or whatever. Every other story that ever filled you with wonder wears off. This one won't.

If it comes into your life...If you see Jesus as not just a wonderful guy who we try to emulate and maybe God will bless us, but if you see him as the true Isaac, the one who took God's frown so you could have God's smile...who *lost* the laughter so we could have it...then into your life will come this wonder and your laughter will be transformed from bitter laughter and from nervous laughter into the laughter of grace, which never goes away because it's not based on your performance.

And all you have to do is open the door. Like Sarah,  
your husband can't open it for you. Your mom and  
dad can't open it for you. Your pastor can't open it for  
you. You have to say, like Sarah and Mary said,  
"Who would have thought it could happen to me?  
But here the Lord stands at the door of my heart."  
Will you open the door and invite him to come in.  
And in will come the wonder that you need.

Let's pray...