

A member of Trinity has a bag of vegetables from their garden. They stand at my front door, ringing the doorbell. I rush to the door. Oh, thank you, thank you for the yellow wax beans. I love those with butter, salt and pepper. Have a great day.” Scene 2: I look out my living room window and see someone trying to get in the door over at church after hours. They are not a member of our congregation. They are driving a dilapidated vehicle. Now as I watch them, hidden in the back part of the living room, they figure out that the minister lives across the street. So, they come to my door and ring the bell. I am thinking to myself as I see them. They are coming over here to hit me up for some gas money for their car or want me to pay their utility bill. I really don’t want to go the door. Couldn’t I just pretend that I am not home, and not answer the door. I don’t want to face these people. Scene 3: Two fine looking young men with yellow shirts ring the doorbell. I open the door and they smile and tell me that my roof needs to be re-shingled and that their company has a great deal and free estimates. I agree to get an estimate the next day. However, the two men who give the estimate to my wife and I want us to sign on the dotted line that day as they sit in our living room. They don’t want to leave our house without a deal. What have I done? Why did I let them in?

You and I have different reactions to people when they approach our front door? Happy go lucky, apprehensive, or please just go away. What would you do if Jesus Christ were at your front door? How would you receive him? Would you invite him in, or slam the door shut and run out the back? The fact is God is at your door today as I share His Word with you. So what will you do now that you know that God is at your door? In order to answer that question let’s take a look at what Abraham did when God was at his door. 1) Time to serve 2) Time to listen

Our text unfolds as Abraham was sitting in the doorway to his tent during the heat of the day. Perhaps he was dreaming over the recent events of his life in which God had appeared to him and renewed his promise to give him a son, even in his old age. Maybe he was trying out the new names God had given to him and his wife. He was no longer to be known as Abram but Abraham, which means “Father of a multitude.” His wife was no longer to be called Sarai but Sarah, which means “princess.” Both names were to remind the couple that through them God would establish a great nation, a nation from which kings would come, including the King of Kings who would save the world from sin. Perhaps because he was lost in his thoughts Abraham didn’t notice the three men standing a little ways off from his tent, at least not right away. They were strangers and therefore the protocol of the day dictated that they not approach the tent until invited to do so. When Abraham finally noticed them standing there with the mid-day sun beating down on their head he leapt to his feet and hustled over to the traveling party.

Don’t you like the way that Abraham greeted these strangers? Though he was rich and powerful and had an in with God he did not think it beneath him to bow before these strangers and offer them his services. With his humility Abraham teaches us that our neighbor is someone for us to serve, not take advantage of. And boy, did Abraham ever serve these strangers! Once he seated his guests and provided water for them to wash their feet he ran to his wife Sarah and asked her to make unleavened cakes from three seahs of flour. Do you know how many foot-long pieces of flat bread three seahs of flour makes? 128 loaves! Fresh bread wasn’t the only thing on the menu either. Leaving Sarah, Abraham ran off to his herd where he picked out a calf that would provide the tenderest meat for his guests. This was quite a treat because meat was usually only served on festive occasions. To top things off Abraham set out some cottage cheese for the guests to munch on and then like a waiter at an expensive restaurant he stood off to the side ready to attend to his guests’ needs. Through all this Abraham showed that he was not only humble but very generous towards his neighbor. It was as if Abraham was serving God himself.

Well he was wasn't he? Yes, Abraham was serving God along with two angels but at the time he didn't know it! Abraham wasn't just putting on a good show to impress these visitors because they were from heaven; he was just treating them the way he treated all of his guests. Had we stumbled into Abraham's campsite that dusty afternoon he would have demonstrated the same humility and generosity to us.

If we think that Abraham went a bit overboard in his hospitality perhaps it's time for us to adjust our standards. God did not create us human beings to bounce off one another like billiard balls; he created us to serve and to care for each other. He wants us to serve others as Abraham did – as if we were serving God himself. Jesus once told his disciples, "I tell you the truth, whatever you [do] for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you [do] for me"(Matthew 25:40).

Think about that next time Mom asks you to do the dishes or take the garbage out. Do those chores as if you were serving God himself. But don't just be humble and generous in your service towards your family and friends be humble to strangers as well. For example when you stop at a gas station to use the washroom don't just slop around and leave it a mess because you'll never use it again, instead use the paper towel that you just dried your hands with to wipe up the sink for the next person. When you are out for walk and you see trash blowing across someone's yard don't just watch it go bounding across the lawn, walk over and pick it up even if it isn't your trash. Friends, God is not just at your door, he's at the playground, the office, and the mall. He's everywhere giving us countless opportunities to show our love for him by serving others. Therefore be prepared to serve as Abraham did! Some years ago I found a flashlight that I needed and I tried to turn it on and it wouldn't work. I hadn't used it in a long time. When I opened it up the batteries had gone corroded and had leaked all over and not only were the batteries ruined but the flashlight was ruined. Why? Batteries are made to be used. Human beings are made for service. And when we're not used in serving other people, we get corroded, ruined on the inside. God says I was made, I was created for service.

Serving Proves that I belong to Jesus Christ. In the New Testament church, when they would welcome new members into the body of Christ, the family of God, they would say, "Welcome, Jesus Christ now has a new pair of eyes to see with... Jesus Christ now has a new pair of ears to listen to the hurts of others... Jesus Christ has a new pair of hands to help others... Jesus Christ now has a new heart to love others with."

Ministry, not attendance, is evidence that Christ is in you. The Bible says that one of the purposes of pastors is to help you get ready for your ministry in life, that God put you here on earth for. Serving others is a way to serve God. Jesus said, "Whatever you do for others, you're doing for Me. Even a cup of cold water given in my name it's like being done to Me." If I'm not serving others, I'm not serving God. Serving Makes Life meaningful.

In our Gospel lesson about Jesus' visit to Mary and Martha's Jesus shows us that serving him is only part of what he wants us to do. He also wants us to be ready to listen to him as Mary did. In fact, listening to His Word is the best way we can serve Him. Therefore it's important for us to realize that it wasn't God's curiosity that caused him to pay Abraham a visit. You see God hadn't stopped by just to see what kind of host Abraham was. No, God had stopped by to strengthen faith, especially Sarah's, and God strengthens faith by speaking to us. You see up until now all of God's words concerning the promise of a son had been directed to Abraham. No doubt Abraham shared these words with Sarah but she had yet to hear from God himself. While that was no excuse for unbelief, God, in his love for Sarah, wanted to strengthen her confidence in the promise. After all she was 89 years old and Abraham was 99 so humanly speaking the

chance of having a child seemed impossible. Therefore once the meal was done the Lord asked Abraham where Sarah was. That was Abraham's first clue that this was no ordinary visitor. In that culture strangers did not ask about another man's wife. Besides, this stranger knew Sarah's new name!. Although he asked, God knew exactly where Sarah was - she was standing behind him hidden behind the tent door eavesdropping on the conversation. That's what God wanted, after all the words that he was about to speak were for her benefit.

God said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son"(Genesis 18:10). Not only did God repeat the promise that a child would be born to Abraham and Sarah, he gave the couple a time frame for when it would all happen. In a year Sarah would give birth to a child! Earlier Abraham had laughed with joy when he had heard that promise. Now Sarah too laughed but her laughter was different. Was it possible that she, an 89 year old would have a baby? No way, what a joke! Sarah found God's promise laughable.

Do we, like Sarah, find God's promises laughable? When Jesus said, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well"(Matthew 6:33). Do we think that it's naive to believe that if we actually put God first in everything – in our worship time, our offerings, or time for prayer that everything else in life will fall into place? That might have worked for the people in the Bible but it won't work for us. When Jesus said, "Everything is possible for him who believes." (Mark 9:23) do we scoff and think that that isn't true for those who are trying to work through broken relationships? Do we think that we just can't afford to forgive, or ever learn to trust those who have hurt us? If we think that way it will be impossible because we will be relying on ourselves and not on God.

If you have been guilty of finding God's promises to be laughable then hear the rebuke that God gave to Sarah. "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?" (Genesis 18:13, 14) Really, is anything too hard for the Lord? Of course not otherwise he wouldn't be God and he wouldn't be worth worshipping! If you need to be convinced that God is powerful just stand outside in the middle of a thunderstorm and see how long you are willing to stand out in the open with lightning flashing all around you. Or take a walk to your garden and look at the plants that are growing there. Isn't it amazing that such life can spring forth from a hard small beginning we call a seed? If you need to be convinced that God loves you just gaze at the cross and contemplate what Christ did there. As John said, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16).

We all need to repent for falling for Satan's old lie that God can't do what he says, or that he won't because he doesn't really love us. Learn to become a good listener like Abraham and take to heart all of God's promises trusting that they are true. Life becomes much easier to take when we take to heart what Paul said, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). God is at your door. Be prepared to serve him by serving others remembering that John said, "...anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen"(1 John 4:20). But be prepared to listen to God too. Labor for the Lord begins with sitting at his feet and listening to His Word. God is at your door as a visitor who wants to bless you, don't turn him away but welcome him into your life. Amen.