Genesis 18:1 The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.

Do you know what Hebrews 13:2 says? It says, **“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”**

Those are rather interesting words, and I believe those words are given to us to help us to remember to be kind and helpful to those who are strangers to us. We are reminded to be kind and helpful because as the text says, **“people have entertained angels without knowing it.”** Now I want you to think about that for a moment. Is the point of this passage that angels run around? Is the point of this passage that we live and act like God’s children? It is rather clear that the point is that we live and act like God’s children because note that the passage does say you may entertain angels and you will never know it! I like that point. If you will never know that you are entertaining angels, then every stranger you meet you are to treat well! Please note this says nothing about angels, the frequency of their visits or even if they still visit today. It is about us, our actions and our hearts!

I mention that passage because of our text for today. Abraham has a visitor. As we look at this text there are so many things for us to contemplate and foremost in that contemplation is the simple question: “What does God wish to teach us as He reveals this history in His Word?” Let’s jump in and see what we can learn.

The question is often asked, “Did Abraham know that it was the Lord who came to visit him?” Me, I am simple and I say, Yes! Yes, because our text starts by announcing, **“The Lord appeared to Abraham…”** In other words, that was the fact right from the beginning. I think if it were any other way, that our text would then speak of the visit of the three and then somewhere along the line make the startling conclusion: “Abraham realized it was the Lord!” We don’t find that. What we find is the straight out pronouncement that the Lord appeared to Abraham. Is there any reason to not go with the simple words?

I do understand why people want to wrestle with this and such. If Abraham knew this was the Lord right from the get go, then all the emphasis that people promote about hospitality and being humble on Abraham’s part as the heart of the lesson becomes mere garbage. It is clear from the beginning that Abraham treats these visitors as very important people. From washing their feet, to the preparation of the meal, and to the choice calf prepared…all of these things show that Abraham consider these guests to be very important and special. And just so you know, when it says that three seahs of flour were prepared, please note that is approximately 20 quarts of flour! This was not just some simple meal being prepared. This was a feast!

A few other things worthy of note. Please remember that Abraham was a very wealthy man. As such, his place of living was not just one tent but without a doubt a complex of tents and shelters spread out over a considerable area. Abraham’s tent would have been somewhere in the middle of all of this. Add to that fact that there would have been sentries posted, guards to make sure the family and compound was safe. Yet, these three men appear in the sight of Abraham, evidently without warning of their approach or alarm being given off. It is just one of the ways that tells me how Abraham knew these men were special and unique.

Finally, add to these observations the fact that the men are fed and entertained at the tent of Abraham himself. Sarah, very properly for those days, is actually not in the same place the men are at but is very nearby, that is, she is **“in the tent,”** probably the men are sitting in Abraham’s main tent under the great tree of Mamre with Sarah in the next room over in this large tent. To ask about Sarah was rather unusual for visitors. That they knew who Sarah was is telling too or the fact that the main meal was actually prepared by or directly overseen by Sarah is also telling. Again, these visitors were important and recognized as such.

How important? The main visitor is clearly designated as **“The Lord.”** This is none other than the True God who at this point appears to Abraham as a man, escorted by two other men who later on will be revealed to be angels. Just think of that. The Lord, the Almighty God has come to Abraham, has lowered himself to humanity in order to accomplish his purpose. What was that purpose? To show his care and concern for Abraham and Sarah and to strengthen the faith of both of them. Strengthen Sarah’s faith by announcing again the birth of her child and to strengthen Abraham’s faith by allowing Abraham make comment on the coming judgment God is planning on bringing upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

That’s it! This text is not about hospitality or humility. This text is not in any way about Abraham or Sarah other than the fact that they needed this personal care of the Lord. This text is about God taking care of his servants, of God displaying his grace and mercy and giving his people hope and comfort.

I believe the main focus of this text is Sarah. Sarah is now 89 years old. Sarah has been promised that she would have a child and that child would eventually become a great nation. But Sarah is 89. Her body has stopped working as it should and I have no doubts that Sarah is struggling with this promise of God, struggling with how this can work and with whether or not God will actually do what He says. In other words, Sarah is us!

That’s right, Sarah is us! We have before us promises and hopes of the Lord but we doubt. We waver in whether or not all of this is really true and right. We easily get swept up in the ways of the world and forget the ways of the Lord. And though we have seen the goodness, wonder and marvel of our Lord in his Son Jesus, we still struggle to keep our faith alive and well. We struggle because all too often like Sarah we let the focus become us rather than the Lord.

What do I mean? Again Sarah was 89 and supposed to have a child. Hey, when she was 20 she couldn’t get pregnant and now she was supposed to have a kid once everything for years had stopped functioning. Why 14 years before hand, when things weren’t working, it was Sarah who came up with the idea of Hagar and getting Abraham a child through her. That worked horribly. Hagar despised Sarah. And Ishmael, this child that Sarah probably figured she would adopt, well, he turned out to be a real challenge and horror in Sarah’s life, so much so, that eventually Hagar and Ishmael will be sent packing.

All of these things weighed on Sarah’s mind. Don’t they sometimes plague us too? The Lord tells us He is always with us and working for our good, but we have all kinds of doubts and worries, struggles and fears with this promise. Something happens, anything sometimes, and we begin to doubt the goodness and love of God for us. Instead of clinging to what God says and promises, we focus in on the problem, the bad thing, the struggle and determine that surely God has abandoned us. Never. He would never do that. God just has his own timeline and timeframe for everything. Yep, we doubt the goodness, love and grace of God in our lives, just like Sarah.

And when the Lord appears and renews this promise and now puts a time line on it, **“I will surely return to you about his time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son,”** Sarah was filled with doubt. Verse 12 says, **“So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, ‘After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?’”** Sarah is chastised for that laugh. Chastised because the Lord knew her heart and knew her doubt. The Lord knew and the Lord was there to encourage and bolster the faith of this woman.

That’s why verse 14 says: **“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”** This same truth still applies to us. Is anything too hard for the Lord? What are you going through that the Lord can’t handle and bring his blessings? What promise of the Lord do you think He has forgotten? Do you think he is not with you? Do you think he has given you more than you can bear? Do you think the Lord will not grant you eternal life and salvation? Do you doubt the Lord? But listen, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?

I remember a dear member of ours who whenever I would visit would say, “Oh Pastor, I don’t know if I am good enough to get to heaven.” Every time that was said, my answer was always the same, “Your right, you aren’t good enough to get to heaven. For that matter you are not even close. But thank God Jesus was good enough for you. Thank goodness Jesus gives you his righteousness, and with that the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. Thank goodness for Jesus, because he is good enough and He always keeps his promises!”

As I look at this section of God’s history in working with his people I am so bowled over. God came and appeared in the way he did, did what he did, including eating with this family, just so He could encourage and comfort Sarah. I believe this visit, and the small chastisement of Sarah gave her a new hope and a new focus. No longer was Sarah focused on her frail body and old age. No longer was Sarah thinking like the world, looking at the reality around her and thinking that was it. Now her focus was on the promise of the Lord and his power. Now her focus was on what God could do.

That’s where our focus needs to be too. Not on what we think or on how we see things, but rather on the goodness, grace, mercy and power of God. God is working in our lives. God is saving souls and bringing his children to eternal life. God is forgiving our sins and overlooking our faults. God is keeping his promises, every one of them.

So cast aside your doldrums. Forget what you think are the facts and focus on the Lord. His Son has come. Come from that ancient race of Abraham, a descendent of Isaac, and the hope of Jacob. All that God had promised did come true. The Savior has served as our atoning sacrifice. The Savior has in his resurrection brought us life and salvation. The Savior has said that heaven is our eternal destination. The Savior has promised these things and much more. Don’t doubt, but believe. Believe that God can do everything and all the things that he has promised. That is what faith is all about.

One final thing. I wish that today, God would still come and visit us personally like he did Abraham and Sarah. He does not promise to do that. What he does promise is that though His Word and through the gifts He has given the church, your faith and soul will be kept safe and sure in Jesus. You want God’s encouragement, then, make sure you are sitting somewhere where you can hear what the Lord has to say. Today, that means sitting in church. God bless you as you hear and believe His Holy Word. Amen.