**IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD**

Genesis 18:1-15 (Key Verse 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

In today’s passage, the Lord appeared to Abraham and Sarah, through the three visitors, to deliver great news. In a year’s time, Abraham and Sarah were to be with child; the son of the promise. The opening verse of the passage starts with Abraham sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. This paints to us a picture of a worn out, discouraged, dejected couple who have been waiting for the Lord to fulfil His promise and give them a son. We get a sense of how dry were the hearts of Abraham and Sarah which have succumbed to the reality of their state. Could the Lord deliver on His promise, especially that Abraham and Sarah were both old, past childbearing age, and Sarah has been barren?

Is there anything too hard for the Lord? No! God will still deliver on His promise. He can do all things by His might and His faithfulness, and by this time next year, Sarah will have a son. However, to plant this faith in their hearts, God intended for Abraham and Sarah to serve the visitors excellently and diligently so, through a lavish meal. God did not leave them in their hopeless state, however, through this physical interaction with the visitors as they prepared the meal, and served them, they could receive the assurance that indeed the Lord will do as He promised; there is nothing too hard for the Lord to do. May we be encouraged to serve the Lord through people, and get to receive the word deeply in our hearts that He can do all things. I pray that we also experience the refreshing power of the faith of servantship, and showing hospitality to one another, and even to strangers, with humility and excellence as through we are serving God Himself.

What are you believing God for? What challenges and limitations are you faced with? I pray, at the end of today’s service, we can answer the Lord’s question “Is there anything too hard for the Lord”? Are you able to look beyond your limitations, and feeble strengths, and turn your eyes to the Lord who can do anything? I encourage you all, to sincerely listen and answer the Lord’s question: “Is there anything too hard for the Lord to do?”

Look at verse 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**. It was during the heat of the day; the sun was at its hottest, and Abraham couldn’t do much in that heat, but to be seated as he awaited the heat to cool off. This is not only the picture of weather/climate conditions; so harsh and paralyzing, but is a glimpse of the heart of Abraham and his wife Sarah. Their hearts were dry, and downcast in that they were old and seemingly no hope for them in receiving the promised son.

As Abraham was seated at the entrance to his tent, in that scorching heat, he saw something. Look at verse 2. **Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground**. God saw Abraham and Sarah, and their dejected hearts. He didn’t leave them to waste away in their discouragement, but rather, came for their aid and refreshment. The Lord appeared to Abraham in a human form; as a visitor through the three men standing nearby. Perhaps the Lord could have visited Abraham and Sarah via a vision or a dream, but somehow, the Lord chose to appear physically before them. Of course, we all know that that it is one thing to speak over the phone with a loved one; family member, mom or dad or a friend, but the experience is somewhat different, and more pleasant when you meet them face to face. If it is this pleasant to meet these loved ones in person, can you imagine how much more it is to meet the Lord Himself in this form? Yes, the Lord appeared before Abraham & Sarah in this physical form so that He can deeply remove from their hearts all manner of discouragements, and all the heart aches, removed by the pleasant presence of the Lord.

It was a common practice at the time to be hospitable. A noble family is one that is ready to welcome visitors and to serve them. However, these visitors were welcomed in a different manner. It was not just as it was the custom, but Abraham went an extra mile, and warmly welcomed them. Look at his heart and attitude: **he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground**. This was a man about a 100 years old, yet, like a teenage boy, he hurried to meet them. This is the wealthy Abraham, I mean even kings bowed before him, however, he lowered himself to the state of a servant, and bowed to the ground. Yes, the great Abraham bowed to the ground to a people he didn’t even know. It is not like he has met them before, and agreed that at an appointed time and date that they will come to visit. No. In fact, these three men were standing by. They could’ve been taking some rest, and then continue on their journey, but Abraham hurried to meet and welcome them to his house.

We can see that he was not just being hospitable to common visitors; he saw beyond and saw more in them. These three men didn’t come travelling in chariots with their attendants and servants; wearing fine clothes of the most expensive fabrics, with jewellery of the most precious of metals and stones. These were just mere men, in fact, nothing deserving of being welcomed in this kingly manner. However, it is from the heart and the actions of Abraham, that he saw something different. Abraham saw God in them. These explains why he hurried to meet these strangers, and as a servant, not considering his high social status which is nothing in the face of God, how he bowed before them as an act of a surrendering servant, and most importantly, an act of worship before God.

Have you ever wondered how God can appear to you? It could be that God appears to you through a God-fearing wife. Perhaps I might just look at a wife to be as just a person to help my lonely state as a man. However, this could be God Himself appearing to me! Yes, you might see your bible teacher as this zealous, and sometimes crazy Christian, however, that bible teacher or that church friend could be God Himself appearing to you. Sometimes you might look at your bible student as that annoying responsibility that seem to be wasting away your peace, or that heavy religious duty that I must do with burdened heart that seem to not allow me to have a bit of fun; relaxing, going out instead of having bible studies. However, even those bible students, could be God appearing to you!

Let us see how the Lord helped Abraham and Sarah. Looked at verses 3 – 5. **3 He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. 4 Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. 5 Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.” “Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”** Abraham offered water to have the visitors’ dusty and wearied feet to wash them, and for them to be rested from the travels under the scorching sun. He carefully assessed their state, came into their shoes and served them with whatever he had. He also offered to get them something to eat, to be refreshed and then go on their way. Because this was the way God chose to help Abraham and Sarah from their hopelessness, when he offered to serve them, God, thorough the three visitors, agreed to be hosted and served that way.

Let us see in detail, how Abraham and Sarah, served the three men. Look at verses 6 – 8. **6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of the finest 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.** Abraham, with his wife Sarah, and the rest of his household prepared a lavish meal: It was rare to serve meat in those times at it was expensive, but he prepared a tender choice calf, served with bread made of the most finest of flours. Dessert was also served; some curds; which are sour milk/yoghurt/cheese, and they had milk to drink. This was a very delicious and nutritious meal. You can see the heart of Abraham & Sarah by the quality of the lavish meal served, and also the manner in which they served with humility and excellence. When all was prepared, you can see Abraham, not sitting with the visitors at the table, but like a servant, he stood away from the table but near them so that he could attend to whatever needs they had.

What do you have to serve God with? Abraham had resources and a chef of a wife, that he used to serve God so excellently. What do you have? Do you need as much of Abraham’s possession to serve God? Do you think it is hard to serve God because you have little? No, the Lord only needs your heart with whatever little you have. Do you think it is hard to serve God because your heart is beyond redemption; deeply spiritually selfish, and living for yourselves and own problems? No, it is not. By one act of genuine repentance, our stubborn hearts are softened, and are able to serve the Lord.

This was God’s way of healing the downcast hearts of Abraham and Sarah, and injecting fervour in them through faith as they were serving. You see, we can learn that when we serve, with humility and a spirit of excellence, we do not this only for the refreshment and aid of others, but more so, this is done for us! Have you ever tasted the fuelling joy of serving someone with the word of God? I have. I remember back in my days as a student here on campus how I used to study the bible with my classmates and peers/friends. There was on particular day when I studied the bible with my friend about the Samaritan woman. Yes, I was going through a lot; my studies were chowing me, failing and most of the people I first came to Wits with were either in their final or 3rd years, while I was still limbing through. However, after the bible study, and how I saw the word of God being planted in my friend’s heart, I was elated and energised that I walked from Campus down to deep Melville, at night, so refreshed when I served my friend with the word of God. It was an amazing feeling, that to this day, I still remember. It was so wonderful, that all my present problem were not issues at all, and was able to overcome those negative thoughts. Yes, this refreshment is available to you as well, if not even more. May God move us today, to have a heart of servantship through teaching and preaching the word of God. Amen!

You know, one of the most amazing virtues of our UBF missionaries is their heart to serve, and serving wholeheartedly. Yes, our Korean missionaries would not only serve us with diligent and graceful bible studies, but literally, they opened their very own homes for us. I stayed with the missionary families for about 2 years; they gave me a roof over my head, and man did they serve me some wonderful food that I even got to learn a bit of their language and eat their food; kimchi. For this, I believe that their lives were greatly blessed indeed, in as much as the recipients of their service.

There was a study conducted on depressed adolescents. It was found that proactively participating in helping others is an important way to prevent and eliminate depression in adolescents. Positive psychological qualities included improving mental health, and achieving self-healing of depression and self-help through helping others.

What does the bible say in encouraging us to serve others with a similar spirit of Abraham and Sarah? [Hebrew 13:2] **Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it**. And such people are indeed the most blessed. May God grow in us, a heart of humility and servantship, teaching the word of God to all strangers, even our known brothers and sisters, for our own salvation. Amen!

After the delicious meal, and having rested by the warm service of Abraham and his household, the Lord had great news to deliver to Abraham and Sarah most importantly. Look at verses 9, 10. **“Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There, in the tent,” he said. 10 Then one of them 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**. If there were news to revive the downcast hearts of these two couple, was nothing but this: that they will be with child and will be born in a year’s time. I can imagine how their heart would have skipped a beat for a moment. Here again, we see God who appeared before them in order to help their wearied hearts through not only His presence and the act of serving, but through giving them a word of a sure promise, and this time, even with finer details: Sarah will have a son, and in a years time.

Sarah and Abraham faced a mountain of a situation. Logically, it made sense why they could’ve short-lived their joy: Look at verses 11, 12. **11 Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”.** Yes, they were all very much old to bare children, and worse, Sarah has been barren. So, it made sense why they were dejected again. However, this was not a time to use common sense which is limited to a human being’s ability and strength. Yes, it was no time for sense, but a time of faith in the Lord who is able to do anything. Is there anything too hard for the Lord? Absolutely nothing!

But God rebuked, and encouraged Sarah to have faith in Him, and to look beyond her human limitations. Look at verse 13. **Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’.** The Lord rebuked Sarah for not having faith in Him who is able to do anything, no matter how humanly hard it is. Look at verse 14, and let us read it together: **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.”** Is anything too hard for the Lord? It could be impossible with one’s strength and ability. Is anything too hard for the Lord? It could be that I am born with the natural abilities to seed a child or a natural ability to fight and to move a truck, but find it extremely hard, if not impossible to have a child or to overcome sin. No matter how hard I would fast, how intense I would go to the gym to prepare to fight those demons, I will be defeated to a pulp on my own. Yes, it might be too hard for me, but not for the Lord. Nothing is too hard for the Lord.

You could be an Abraham or a Sarah with an impossible to overcome situation before you, seemingly. What is it? What is it that seems to hard to overcome? Can it be that all important test or exam to pass? Can it be that decision to marry, being seemingly overcome and overwhelmed by all the challenges that come with that decision; finances to pay Magadi/lobola and how one is going to support the family, choosing the right partner, living arrangements etc? It might seem too hard, but the good news is that nothing is too hard for the Lord. What about sin? Are you so deeply entangled in sin that has you by the throat, wasting away in it day by day, and with no hope of being delivered from it? Yes, it seems impossible and indeed extremely hard overcome sin on your own. However, nothing is too hard for the Lord. Not even sin, because, the good news is that, with repentance, that sin stands already defeated and buried by and through the cross of Jesus Christ. Let us turn our hearts and faith to the Lord, who is on our side, ready and able to save us, to help us overcome all our limitations and enjoy the promised that are in Him.

I am currently praying for marriage. To be honest, I never imagined how hard this was going to be. Even though I would say I was theoretically ready to marry, spiritually, I have been chasing shadows in this department, and it got real when I began to encounter many issues practically in this regard. These ranged from the psychology and spiritual principle of choosing a wife. I was so shocked to see how worldly minded I were in terms of a criteria of choosing a wife. I was so frustrated that a tried a couple of times to be in a courtship with a certain special lady, but that time, it was so ridiculously hard to accept her because of my worldly unspiritual mind. Though it was hard, God came to my aid, through prayers and prayer support, I was able to get victory, and finally see her as my God given suitable helper. God helped me overcome this through one Uber driver with whom I had what I would call, the conversation of my life. I am 35 years old, and this potential is also not far off in her thirties. I had wished to have about 3 to four kids, and by now maybe perhaps have already had 2 by now. But it is not the case. So many times I am overcome with the fear of not having kids since I have left it too late to marry and then have kids. I saw myself that after I get married, if God could grant me the miracle of twin babies, if not triplets or even quadruplets I would gladly accept. Also, financially, I need to raise money for Magadi and even for the actual wedding and how I will support my family. It is really overwhelming on my own. But I am encouraged; is there anything too hard of the Lord? Absolutely not. Please, may you all pray for my marriage. Amen!

In conclusion, is there anything too hard for the Lord? This is God’s assurance to you that with Him, nothing is too hard for you, and that you will indeed overcome. Now, let us turn our hearts away from our abilities and limitations, but on the strength and the might of God. Are you downcast in your spirit. I pray you are inspired to stand up and serve someone with the spirit and faith of servantship as seen in Abraham. That is our deliverance to overcome. I pray that God my raise an army of campus shepherds and bible teachers through us all. I pray God might raise even sacrificial house churches; hospitable by the word and all other human forms of help to students, as though serving angels and God Himself.