

Is There Anything Too Hard for the Lord?

Genesis 18:1–15; 21:1–7

Psalms 116:1–2, 12–19

Introduction: When All Hope Seems Lost

A few months ago, I experienced a moment that reminded me how easily we can misjudge a situation and assume that all hope is lost.

Last December, I travelled home to Kenya after being away for a year and a half. Thanks to the generosity of members of this congregation, who helped cover the cost of the flight, that journey was possible. I had given up on any hopes of going home when the flight cost doubled in December. Members of this church went out of their way and sacrificially paid for my travel. My family and I will forever be grateful. It was a wonderful reunion with family and friends, filled with laughter, conversations late into the night, and the joy that comes from being surrounded by those you love. But eventually January 7th arrived, and it was time to return to Canada.

My flight from Nairobi to London was scheduled to depart at 11:30 p.m. I arrived at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport early, checked in without any problems, received my boarding pass, and made my way to what I believed was the correct gate.

As I waited, I received a notification from British Airways indicating that the flight might be delayed until midnight. Relieved, I settled into my seat and began scrolling through my phone.

If you have ever been in a busy international airport, you know there is a constant stream of announcements. Boarding calls, gate changes, final calls, names being read over the loudspeakers, it all becomes background noise after a while.

I assumed none of those announcements had anything to do with me.

Then, around 11:55 p.m., something caught my attention. The waiting area seemed unusually empty for a flight heading to London. Curious, I checked the flight status on my phone. To my horror, it read: "Departed – 11:50 p.m."

My heart sank. I looked again at my boarding pass. Had I missed something? Had the flight actually left without me? I quickly prayed, "Lord, please don't let this happen to me."

Of course, I knew that if I missed that flight, I had no way of paying for another one.

Panic set in. I hurried through the terminal searching for airline staff. I asked an airport worker whether British Airways had an office on site. He looked at me and said, "The airline office isn't here. The flight must have left."

At that moment, it felt hopeless.

As far as I could tell, the opportunity was gone. The door had closed. There was nothing more that could be done.

But then, as I rushed toward another desk, a British Airways employee approached me and asked, "Are you Kennedy?"

"Yes," I replied.

She said, "We've been looking for you. Didn't you hear the announcements? We've called your name several times. You're the only passenger missing. The flight is still here, but you need to run!"

The gate had been changed from Gate 14 to Gate 16.

I ran as fast as I could, and moments later I was on board.

For a few minutes, I had been absolutely convinced that I had missed my flight. Everything seemed to point in that direction. The information on my phone, the empty waiting area, even the airport worker's words all suggested that the opportunity was gone.

But what seemed impossible from my perspective was not impossible at all.

The plane had not left. My seat was still there. The airline had not forgotten me. In fact, they were actively looking for me and calling my name.

Sometimes life feels that way.

We look at our circumstances and conclude that the door has closed, the dream has died, the opportunity is gone, the healing will never come, or the promise can never be fulfilled. We see only the limitations of the situation and assume the story is over.

But the question God asks Abraham and Sarah is the same question He asks us today:

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

When Sarah looked at her age, God's promise seemed impossible. When Abraham looked at the years that had passed, the future seemed closed. Yet God was still at work, accomplishing what human beings could never accomplish on their own.

The God who opened Sarah's barren womb is the same God who specializes in situations that appear hopeless. What seems impossible to us is not impossible for Him.

The story is not over simply because we cannot see a way forward. God often has possibilities that we have not yet imagined and promises that are still waiting to be fulfilled.

1. The Long Wait Between Promise and Fulfillment

To appreciate the power of God's question, we must remember how long Abraham and Sarah had been waiting.

God first called Abraham when he was seventy-five years old and promised that he would become the father of a great nation. Yet year after year passed without a child. Ten years passed. Twenty years passed. Twenty-five years passed.

Now Abraham is nearly one hundred years old, and Sarah is ninety.

Humanly speaking, the promise had expired.

There comes a point when disappointment hardens into resignation. You stop expecting anything to change. You adjust your life around the pain. You learn to live with unanswered questions.

Many of us know that feeling.

Some have been praying for a loved one for years.

Some carry grief that never completely leaves.

Some wonder whether relationships can ever be restored.

Some look at the challenges facing the church or the world and wonder whether renewal is possible.

Abraham and Sarah knew exactly what it felt like to wait so long that hope seemed unreasonable.

Yet God's promises are not governed by human timetables.

2. Sarah's Laughter and Our Own

When the visitors announce that Sarah will have a son, she laughs.

It is not joyful laughter.

It is the laughter of someone who has been disappointed too many times.

It is the laughter of someone who cannot imagine things being different.

It is the laughter that says, "That might have been possible once, but not now."

How often do we laugh Sarah's laugh?

Not out loud perhaps, but quietly in our hearts.

When we hear promises of healing, peace, reconciliation, justice, or renewal, we look at our circumstances and think, "Surely that's not possible."

Sarah's laughter exposes the gap between human possibility and divine possibility.

God responds with one of the most important questions in Scripture:

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

The answer is not found in Sarah's ability to believe.

The answer is found in God's ability to accomplish what He has promised.

3. God's Faithfulness Is Greater Than Our Doubts

One of the most comforting parts of this story is that God does not withdraw His promise because Sarah doubts.

The miracle happens anyway.

Isaac is born not because Abraham and Sarah possess perfect faith but because God possesses perfect faithfulness.

That is good news for all of us.

There are times when our faith feels strong.

There are other times when we struggle to believe at all.

Yet God's faithfulness does not rise and fall with our emotions.

The same God who remained faithful to Sarah remains faithful to His people today.

We may waver, but God does not.

We may question, but God remains steadfast.

We may not always understand His timing, but He never forgets His promises.

4. God's Timing Is Not Our Timing

Genesis 21 begins with a beautiful testimony:

"The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised."

Notice those words:

As He had said.

As He had promised.

Not earlier.

Not later.

But exactly according to God's purpose.

Waiting is difficult because we often interpret delay as abandonment.

But Scripture repeatedly reminds us that God is working even when we cannot see it.

The years of waiting were not evidence that God had forgotten Abraham and Sarah.

The waiting itself became part of the testimony.

When Isaac was finally born, no one could attribute it to human ability.

Everyone could see that this was God's doing.

Sometimes God delays so that when the answer comes, His glory becomes unmistakable.

This reminds me of Habakkuk 2:3

For the vision is yet for an appointed time;

But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.

Though it tarries, wait for it;

Because it will surely come,

It will not tarry.

5. From Laughter of Doubt to Laughter of Joy

In Genesis 18 Sarah laughs in disbelief.

In Genesis 21 she laughs in delight.

She says:

"God has brought laughter for me."

The very thing she thought impossible became the source of her greatest joy.

The child's name, Isaac, in Hebrew is *Yiṣḥāq* which means "he laughs" or "he will laugh"

Every time Sarah called her son, she was reminded of God's faithfulness.

The places where we struggle most to trust God often become the places where we later testify most strongly to His goodness.

What begins as doubt can become praise.

What begins as waiting can become thanksgiving.

What begins as impossibility can become a testimony.

6. The Response of Gratitude

That is why Psalm 116 asks:

"What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me?"

When we remember God's faithfulness, gratitude becomes the natural response.

The psalmist lifts up the cup of salvation and calls upon the name of the Lord.

Sarah responds with laughter and joy.

Abraham responds with obedience.

The church responds with worship.

As we reflect on God's faithfulness in our own lives, we are invited to do the same.

Not merely to ask God for what we need, but to thank Him for all He has already done.

Conclusion: A Question to Carry Home

As I reflect on that night in Nairobi, what stays with me is not simply that I made the flight. What stays with me is how certain I was that the story was over.

Everything I could see pointed in one direction. The gate was empty. My phone said the flight had departed. An airport worker told me the plane had probably left. All the evidence seemed to confirm that I had missed my opportunity.

Yet the reality was very different.

The flight was still there.

My seat was still waiting.

Someone was calling my name.

I wonder how many of us carry situations that feel a bit like that.

Perhaps there is a prayer you have prayed for years and have almost stopped praying.

Perhaps there is a relationship that feels beyond repair.

Perhaps there is grief that has settled deeply into your heart.

Perhaps there is concern for a child, a spouse, a friend, a church, or the future itself.

Perhaps you have quietly concluded, like Sarah, that certain things belong to the past and can never be different.

The older we get, the easier it can be to confuse our experience with God's possibilities.

Sarah looked at ninety years of life and concluded that the promise was finished.

God looked at the same situation and saw a beginning.

The remarkable thing about this story is that God never asks Sarah to figure out how the promise will happen. He simply asks her a question:

"Is anything too hard for the LORD?"

Not, "Can you solve it?"

Not, "Can you explain it?"

Not, "Can you make it happen?"

Only, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?"

As we leave today, perhaps that question is more important than any answer we can give.

What is the situation in your life that seems impossible?

What burden have you been carrying alone?

What promise have you stopped believing?

What hope have you quietly buried?

Take that with you this week.

Hold it before God.

Not because you can see the outcome.

Not because you know how the story ends.

But because the God who appeared to Abraham, visited Sarah, and fulfilled His promise is still the same God today.

And perhaps, somewhere between our limitations and God's faithfulness, we may discover that the story is not yet finished.

For the God who asks the question is also the God who keeps His promises.

Amen.