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St. Dunstan's, Bethesda
Proper 6 (A) - 14 June 2026
Genesis 18:1-15
Psalm 116:1, 10-12, 15-17
Matthew 9:35—10:14

Chasing Wonder

Let us pray:

*I will remember the works of God
and call to mind your wonders of old time.
I will meditate on all your acts
and ponder your mighty deeds.
Your way, O God, is holy;
who is so great a god as our God?
You are the God who works wonders
and have declared your power among the peoples.¹*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

I confess that I am biased, but I believe that the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* contains some of the most beautiful poetry in the English language. That is, in fact, one of the distinctive features of the Anglican tradition, of which the Episcopal Church is a part: We are held together by our common, shared prayers. We may not all think the same or believe the same, but by golly we can pray the same.

When you have some time, I encourage you to delve into the prayers in the *BCP*, as it's called. In addition to the service of Holy Eucharist, which we generally pray together on Sundays, you will find the Daily Office – Morning, Noonday, and Evening Prayer, along with Compline, the “bedtime prayers” of the Church. You also will find collects (which simply means “collected prayers”) for the seasons of the Church year and for various occasions and milestones in your life.

¹ Psalm 77:11-14

And if you want to know what the Episcopal Church teaches about a whole host of theological topics, from “Human Nature” to “Christian Hope” (and so many things in between), the Catechism is a tremendous reference.

If you don't have a copy of *The Book of Common Prayer* in your life, please let me know; I can hook you up.

Of all the prayers in the *BCP*, the one that is most likely to make your Rector cry comes at the end of the service of Holy Baptism. I will offer it for us now, and if you'd like to follow along, it may be found at the top of page 308 in the red *Book of Common Prayer*.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon these your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised them to the new life of grace. Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and **wonder** in all your works, Amen.

The gift of joy and wonder...

There it is.

Isn't this what we all want for ourselves and those we love? In addition to the basic necessities of life like food and shelter and clothing, don't we all long for that wide-eyed experience of awe, of losing ourselves to something far more vast and beautiful and magnificent that we could ever ask or imagine?

I'm going to pause for a moment and invite you to picture, in your mind's eye, something or someone that gives you joy and wonder.

Would anyone like to share?

*I will remember the works of God
and call to mind your wonders...*

When the Church makes a new Christian, when we welcome someone into the household of God, we pray that that person might receive the “gift of wonder.” What does this mean? What does it suggest?

In English, the word “wonder” means

“a cause of astonishment or admiration”

a “marvel,” or a “miracle”

“the quality of exciting amazed admiration”

“rapt attention or astonishment at something awesomely mysterious or new to one's experience”

and

“a feeling of doubt or uncertainty.”²

Did you catch that? To experience wonder is to be astonished, to perceive the miraculous, to admire, to stand before that which is overwhelming and full of awe, something mysterious and altogether new.

And...It is to doubt. It is to be uncertain.

Why in the world would we pray for someone to doubt, for someone to question, for someone not to know, 100% positively for sure?

For those of us who pride ourselves on having all the answers, doesn't this seem just a tad perverse?

²<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wonder>

Why would we intentionally set someone up for ignorance?

Because, beloveds, that is where the Abundant Life, the life that God imagines and Jesus promises, begins.

To experience wonder is to enter into something larger than ourselves, the contours and limits of which we cannot see.

To experience wonder is to step off the edge of the known, allowing our imaginations to expand and explode.

To experience wonder is not to be in control.

And *I* wonder:

Is that thought inviting, or terrifying...or both?

I think it's safe to say that most of us here got where we are today through self-discipline and self-control, through hard work and dogged perseverance.

We as a community don't tend to like to leave much to chance.

We don't, as a rule, love surprises – at least not where serious matters like our own futures and those of our children are concerned.

We crave predictability.

So it's a bit ironic that we come to Church to praise and devote ourselves to a God Whose love language is unpredictability.

We worship a God of surprise.

And this, quite frankly, can create a disconnect, a cognitive dissonance that is difficult to get our heads around.

What do we do in the face of a God Who doesn't always behave the way we expect – or want, for that matter?

Well, sometimes we cry, out of utter despair and heartbreak. We don't understand why our life is unfolding as it is, and we worry.

It is human nature to push back against the unwanted and unbidden, to dig our heels in out of resistance.

I do that all the time: Like many Episcopalians, I'm not a big fan of change. So when the unexpected happens, my first instinct is to say "NO!"

Not happening, Lord.

Maybe you do that sometimes, too.

And sometimes, when faced with the unexpected, or the absurd, or the seemingly impossible, we just laugh.

It might start small, a little giggle or titter, but then it expands within us, taking over, until it becomes a full-bodied, full-throated guffaw.

There is a fabulous scene from the movie *Mary Poppins*, when Mary and her friend Bert go to visit her Uncle Albert, who has a bit of a problem: He loves to laugh – and when he does, he can't control himself. Suddenly he's airborne, like a balloon floating overhead, untethered.

If you want a pick-me-up on a gloomy day, Google "Mary Poppins" and "I Love to Laugh." I bet it will lift your spirits, too.

The spiritual writer Anne Lamott calls laughter "carbonated holiness."³

Imagine: Laughter is holy, a gift from God.

³ Anne Lamott, *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006).

This morning's reading from Genesis overflows with carbonated holiness as the aged, long-barren Sarah is told that she – a “woman of a certain age” – will have a son. Can you hear it? It starts small, just a little giggle, but then it expands, becoming a full-bodied, full-throated guffaw.

I can imagine her slapping her knee and jabbing Abraham in the ribs at the absurdity of it all.

Have you ever heard of such a thing? That's a good one, God.

It would be sad if it weren't so ridiculous.

Theologian and biblical storyteller Frederick Buechner pictures the scene this way:

after a lifetime in the desert, [Sarah] squinnies her eyes shut, and her laughter is all wheeze and tears running down as she rocks back and forth in her kitchen chair. She is...laughing at the idea of a baby's being born in the geriatric ward and Medicare's picking up the tab...

And yet:

Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?

Is anything too marvelous, too expansive, too limit-exploding for God?

A lot hangs on how we answer that question.

Months later, when their son is born, God tells Sarah and Abraham to name their baby Isaac – from the Hebrew *va-ys-háq*, meaning “he laughs.” Buechner continues,

you can say that God not only tolerated their laughter, but blessed it and in a sense joined in it.⁴

⁴ Frederick Buechner, *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 49-50.

Imagine God laughing. Laughing *with* us, not *at* us – okay, maybe a little bit at us, but not in a mocking, ridiculing way. Laughing gently at just how silly we humans can be, thinking that we know what is and is not possible. Thinking that the way things are now is the way things always will be. Thinking that we've got a handle on truth and reality. Thinking that we understand the fullness of God. Thinking that there are limits to what God can do.

Here's the thing: We Christians call ourselves an Easter people. Every week we stand and affirm that we believe in resurrection and new life, in forgiveness and redemption and second chances. But do we, really? Or does our reason, our unwillingness – or inability – to suspend our disbelief, get in the way of living what we profess?

Today, my friends, we are invited to listen for the lyrical, life-giving laughter of God, inviting us into a yet-more glorious and joy-filled way of being.

Today – just for today – what would it be like to be astonished, to imagine the miraculous, to enter into something mysterious and altogether new?

What would it be like to drink from the fountain of carbonated holiness?

May you be blessed with the gift of joy and wonder, today and always.

Amen.