

## 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent (2/18/24)

Genesis 22:1-14 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, D.F.R.:

What's the hardest thing that a parent could be asked to do? Many people would say that it would be watching one of their children die, but how about if they were asked to kill one of their children?

That's what God asked Abraham to do in our first Scripture lesson. God said to him: **Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.**

Let look at what they meant about Abraham's faith and what it means for our faith, as we consider how:

- We See From Moriah to Calvary
1. See a father's willing sacrifice
  2. See a son's unquestioning obedience
  3. See the substitution which was offered

### 1. See a father's willing sacrifice

God made a difficult request of Abraham. God had promise to make Abraham's descendant's as numerous as the stars in the sky and as many as the sand on the seashore. He had also promised that all the people of the earth would be blessed through Abraham's offspring. And God had made it clear that all of these promises would be carried out through one person – through Abraham's son, Isaac.

Yet now, God says to Abraham, "Your son is going to die," and even more than that, "You are the one who will end his life."

Yet Abraham was able to do this terribly difficult thing that God asked of him, for we 're told: **When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.**

The book of Hebrews points to Abraham as a hero of faith and tells us that Abraham was convinced that God could raise his son from the dead if need be. Abraham was able to think this because he was convinced that God could do the impossible, turn evil to good, make something horrible into a blessing.

God asks us to do difficult things, too: give him our offerings and believe that he will bless us so we end up with more than we started with; to share his Word with others, even if it means imprisonment or death; (and sometimes we don't want to share the Word simply because we're afraid or we might be embarrassed!)

God asks us to do what is right and not to fear what others may say about us or do to us, as Joseph did when he was accused of rape for not sleeping with Potiphar's wife, or as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did when they refused to worship the image of the king.

Certainly what God asked Abraham to do on Mt. Moriah, reminds us that God the Father did the same thing on Calvary. Only God stopped Abraham from offering his son, Isaac. God actually did sacrifice his Son, Jesus Christ, on Mt. Calvary.

## **2. See a son's unquestioning obedience**

The second thing that grabs our attention today is the unquestioning obedience of Abraham's son, Isaac. We read: **As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."**

Right away, Isaac realized that something was wrong. He knew enough about sacrifices to know that you were supposed to bring the sacrificial animal along with you. Yet they hadn't brought a goat, a ram, or calf to sacrifice.

Abraham's response: **God will provide.** Don't worry about it. God will take care of it.

Jesus had that same unquestioning obedience to the will of his Heavenly Father when he saw the bitter cup of suffering that awaited him. His knowledge of what awaited him was so great that he sweated drops of real blood. Yet he still had the strength to pray, **Your will, not mine, be done.** That's obedience. That's willing acceptance to the will of God.

It's that willing obedience that you and I strive to imitate as children of God. Yes, God asks us to do difficult things to do sometimes. He hasn't promised to remove all the thorns and thistles from life that are part of life in this world – the problems of health, finances, home and work that all part of life in this world. Yet we endure them, because we know that this world is only temporary. We know that our true home is with our Father in heaven.

## **3. See a substitute which was offered**

In the end, God did not make Abraham offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Genesis tells us:

**Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."**

Abraham's faith wasn't just words; it was backed up by his actions. He showed that he loved God more than anyone or anything else – even more than his son Isaac, the one through whom all the blessings of God had been promised. Instead, God offered a substitute, a replacement. Genesis tells us: **Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the**

**ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.**

God did the same thing for us as he did for Abraham. Instead of our dying, he provided a substitute. That substitute was his own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. While God did not allow Abraham to sacrifice his son, he sacrificed his own Son, for us sinners.

Today we have been talking about Mt. Moriah and Mt. Calvary, and the obvious similarities between them. But did you know that the connection may be even greater, that they have been near each other or even possibly the same location? Mt. Moriah is the same area that the temple was built by Solomon, and not far away was Golgotha, which we also call Mt. Calvary, the place Jesus died for our sins. God may very well have chosen this place 1500 years earlier, the place where God provided a ram would be sacrificed for Isaac, fully knowing that 1500 years God at this same location would provide the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!

As Christians, we cannot help but look at Mt. Moriah and see Calvary. Although Scripture doesn't draw the comparison between them, we see the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, and we are reminded of God's willingness to sacrifice Jesus for our sins. We see Isaac, willingly obeying his father, even when he doesn't understand, and we recall Jesus' hanging on the cross because this is the cup that his Father asked to drink from. Finally we that just as God provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac, he provided us a substitute for us. Whenever we remember Mt. Moriah, remember also everything that happened at Calvary. Amen.