

“Trust in the God Who Promises”

Genesis 22:1-19

Over Lent, we are working our way through the Bible noting those places where we are learning why Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Last week we went back to Genesis 3 and understood that when Adam and Eve sinned against God, God Himself covered their sins with the skins of animals He sacrificed for them. Here we began to see why sacrifice was necessary. Sin results in death, and separation from God. God requires a ‘sinless’, valuable animal must pay the price for our sins in order for us to be forgiven and have fellowship with God.

The next place in the Bible where we begin to see God reveal more information about why ultimately Jesus must be our sacrifice is in Gen. 22, when God tested Abraham’s faith by asking him to do sacrifice his own son, Isaac. There are two threads we’re going to weave back and forth; how we need to trust God the way Abraham trusted God and how this pre-figures so much of what Jesus would actually do for us on Calvary. Let’s pray:

Our Father in heaven, glorify Yourself through this uncomfortable passage of Scripture and help us to understand that You never intended for Abraham to sacrifice his son, yet You fully intended to sacrifice Your Son on our behalf. May Abraham’s unwavering faith in You encourage us to have the same kind of unwavering faith in You, even when we don’t understand what You are doing at the moment. In the Name of our sacrificed and risen Saviour Jesus ...

Ch. 21 ended with Abraham, again at God’s request, obeying God to do a hard thing – send Ishmael and Hagar away. God promised that Ishmael too would be blessed but he is not the son of the promises God made to Abraham in Ch. 12, 15 and 17, that through Abraham and Sarah’s seed he would have a myriad of descendants, a great name, they would receive the land of Canaan and ultimately the whole world would somehow be blessed through Abraham. These promises will come through Isaac.

Ch. 22 begins with God speaking to Abraham with the intention of testing Abraham’s faith. God simply says ‘Abraham’ and Abraham responds unhesitatingly ‘Here I am’, willing and ready to listen to what God has to say. If sending Ishmael away was hard on Abraham - because he loved Ishmael and had him for the first 13 or so years of his life – how much harder would it be for him to do what God asks next:

² *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.”*

Why does Abraham’s faith need testing? Why does our faith need to be tested also? As Peter said in 1 Pet. 1:7-9, that

⁷ *These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

What is about Abraham's faith that needs to be tested? Abraham has believed in God and His promises. But sometimes Abraham has believed God for His promises more than God, to the point where he went ahead of God and sought to ensure the promises himself. For example: God first told Abraham in Gen. 12:1

"Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

And Abraham left his country Ur as God asked but he took his parents and his uncle and nephew at least, stopping in Haran, where he left them there but still took Lot. Lot's presence becomes a problem later on.

Later in that chapter and once more later on Abraham and Sarah go to Egypt for food and Abraham tells Sarah to lie and say she's his sister. Why? If God said you and Sarah are going to have a myriad of descendants then don't you believe God will protect Sarah? He has to. He does this again later on in Ch. 20, both times resulting in others suffering because of Abraham's lies. In Ch. 15 Abraham asks God if Eliezer his servant is to be the one through whom the promises come and God says No, you and Sarah will have a child. In Ch. 16, Sarah thinks maybe we should help God with his plan and produce a child through my servant. Abraham says sure and has Ishmael through Hagar. God says to Abraham, no, not Ishmael because he's not Sarah's seed.

Then they finally have Isaac but as Isaac grows older Ishmael becomes a problem. So does Abraham believe God for His promises, to the point where he tries to force God's plan according to his way, or does he trust God completely and let God give His promises His way? So this is what the test is about. The encouraging thing about when God tests our faith in Him is that

God Won't Test us Without Enabling Us **(22:1-3)**

God is always with us. His Spirit is always guiding us. When He tested His own Son Jesus in the 40 days in the wilderness we read the summary in Mark's gospel,

Mark 1:12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert,¹³ and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

God's Spirit led Jesus into the dessert and the Angels attended Him and Luke's gospel says right after that Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. If we're saved, we are always assured that nothing gets past God. That if we're going through a trial or a test, He's always with us, empowering us to handle the situation in His strength. Jesus will rely on the Word of God in His temptations with Satan and not go ahead of God and make bread out of stone (He could have) or jump off the temple (He could have and survived).

Paul encourages in trials and tests with 1 Cor. 10:13,

¹³ No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

God enables us with spiritual strength as we trust Him to endure whatever trial or test comes our way. Abraham makes no hesitation to do what God asked him to do. He rises early in the morning with Isaac, two men, split wood for the sacrifice and heads north on a 100km hike to Mount Moriah;

'the place God told him'. And Abraham is trusting God even though it makes no human sense. Why sacrifice the son that God specifically said is the one through whom all God's promises will ultimately come through.

⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ 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."

⁶ 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, ⁷ 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?"

⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

Abraham trusts God and is willing to do what God asks. Abraham encourages us to trust God

Who Fulfills His Promises Even When We Can't See How **(22:4-8)**

Abraham arrives on the 3rd day at Mt. Moriah as God said He would show him. At this point we see the amazing faith of Abraham when he says to the two 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 has grown in his faith. He no longer trusts God just because of His promises. He trusts God who he believes will fulfill His promises even if it takes a miracle. If we think he's just saying these words so as not to disturb the servants we need to read Heb. 11:17-19,

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸ even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." ¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Abraham saw God do the impossible already. Giving him and Sarah a son in their old age. God has blessed him immensely. Abraham is no longer trying to get God's promises by his own hands, he has come to believe that God says all these blessings will come through Isaac. Now God says sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering of wholehearted worship to Him. If that's true, then God will bring Isaac back to life.

We can see here what Jesus would do for us on the cross. When Jesus predicted He would suffer and die, the disciples – especially Peter – outright rejected that idea and tried to dissuade Jesus. Even attacked a guard when Jesus was arrested. They wanted Jesus to set up His kingdom and fulfil God's promises their way, not God's. They had no faith that if Jesus was the Messiah and if Jesus was killed, then the only logical conclusion could be, that like Abraham they must believe God will raise Jesus from the dead. Which is exactly what God did. The disciples understood this afterward but didn't believe it originally. Listen to Peter at Pentecost:

Acts 2:22 "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknow-ledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death

by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Before, Abraham had tried to bring about God's blessings his way and it never worked. Now when God said to sacrifice Isaac, the key to all these promises, Abraham trusted God's way because He knows God can't lie and so, somehow must bring Isaac back to life.

We know God was testing Abraham (v,1) and never intended for him to do this heinous act. As Abraham stretches out the knife, an angel of the Lord speaks and tells him to stop. And Abraham obeys. Abraham trusts God who we He know will do what He prevents Abraham from doing. And that is

God is Willing to Sacrifice His Own Only Son for Us **(22:9-13)**

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

¹² "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."

¹³ 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.

Three times we read God refer to Isaac as Abraham's 'Son, your only son'. Abraham had two sons for sure. This phrase means the unique one, special in your eyes. In John 3:16 we read Jesus is referred to as 'God's Only begotten' or 'One and Only Son'. Like the promises of God hung on Isaac for Abraham, ultimately all these promises hung on Jesus. And God was willing to sacrifice His one and Only Son so that we could receive the blessings of God through faith. Notice how Paul words it in Romans 8:32,

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Response to what? That God is working all things for the good of His us whom He loves so that we will be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28-30). Don't be surprised if God uses some trials and tests to help conform us to the image of His Son which will result in us receiving the blessings of God.

^{1 John 4:9} This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac believing that God's promises would still come through him, even if he died. All this foreshadowed that faith in Jesus, the Lamb God would provide as our sacrifice, would result in our receiving the covering for our sins. And receiving the blessings of God because Jesus' resurrection assures our own one day.

Abraham's assurance to Isaac that God would provide the lamb take on prophetic significance of course, as does his naming of Mt. Moriah as 'The Lord Will Provide'.

¹⁴ 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.”

¹⁵ The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

¹⁹ Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

Abraham reminds us to trust God ...

Who Blesses Us and Others Through Our Obedience **(22:14-19)**

A city would later be built on Mt. Moriah called Jerusalem. We read in 2 Chron. 3:1,

Then Solomon began to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David.

And it was on this hill called Calvary that God did provide The Lamb who would be sacrificed for all our sins. In John 19:17-18 we read

¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸ Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹ Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

As Isaac carried the wood for his own potential sacrifice, Jesus carried the wood of the cross to Mt. Moriah where He would die for our sins. This sacrifice became the source through which God's promised blessings would come. Peter spoke to his fellows Israelites in Acts 3:24-26,

²² For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.’

²⁴ “Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. ²⁵ And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ ²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

And not just to Israel but also to believing Gentiles like us.

Gal. 3:6 Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁷ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” ⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith

The greatest blessing we have is the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus, the Lamb of God. When we accept Christ all our sins are paid for. We have the Spirit dwelling in us. We have the assurance of God's presence always and His power to help us in trials and tests and live a victorious life. We have a new home guaranteed in the New Jerusalem.

God's angel speaks once more to Abraham assuring him that the blessings God promised would all come true because "*you obeyed my voice*". The blessings to so many others would come because one person obeyed God's voice.

When we obey God's Word, others are blessed because of us. Your kids, grandkids, great-grandkids, church generations, village, town, country, world are all blessed through obedience of God's people. When we live by God's Word we make a positive impact on our world. Many people who aren't saved benefit by seeing God work around us and through us. Abraham obeyed God's voice not so much for Himself but for the future generations who would benefit from His obedience. The tests and trials we face are not just about us, but about others who are impacted by us. Trust God and obey Him and watch how He will bless others through us.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please
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