

Fifth Sunday in Lent
03/17/2013
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Genesis 22:1-14
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I bring you grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Word of God for our consideration this morning is from the Old Testament book of Genesis the 22nd chapter.

God tested Abraham. He asked Abraham to sacrifice his son. God knew what Abraham would do. There was no possibility that Abraham was going to disobey God. See when God tests, as here, it's not that He might get an answer to the question; will he or won't he. God is omniscient. He already knows what's going to happen. The testing of Abraham, the testing of us, is for his benefit and our benefit respectively.

This wasn't the first time God tested Abraham. God came to Abram early on and declared to him that He was going to make a great nation of him and that Abram and his family would be God's people. This past Wednesday we read from Genesis 17 that God ordained that there would be a sign that all the men of this nation would have to wear. God had already asked Abram to move. He did it. Abram was obeying God. But God tests for the benefit of His people. The testing is meant, always, to strengthen faith, to exercise it as it were.

So God says to Abram, "*This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.*" We make light of this idea. It seems like no big deal but remember Abram has to go to all his male kin, 8 days and older and say, "This

God, the only true God who is making us His people, well He has given us a sign to mark us as His people. We all have to be circumcised.” It’s amazing that Abram says this to his kin, but it’s more amazing that they actually do it. They’re faithful to the command that God places upon them. They show faith in the promises of God by completing this sign.

But that’s not the only time that Abraham is tested by God. It’s not the only time God gives Abraham an opportunity to exercise his faith. The promise of an heir, the promise of world blessing through Abraham’s offspring, the promise of the Savior was through Isaac. Isaac was the son of promise. He was God’s beginning of Abraham’s blessings. If Isaac were to die then the promise is over. Abraham knew this.

God tested Abraham by having him sacrifice his son. He’s to take his adolescent or maybe teenage son to Moriah and there he is to kill him by his own hand under the command of God. Abraham loads all of the needed things on his donkey. He cut wood. Can you imagine cutting wood on which to sacrifice your son? He brought fire. He brought servants. As he rounds up all of this stuff he has to be thinking about what he’s got to do.

How can I sacrifice my son? God has promised me heirs. He’s promised that a great nation will spring from me. He’s promised a Savior to the world through me. If my son, my only son is sacrificed, how can the covenant of God be kept?

Yet though there must have been these questions Abraham does what he’s asked to do. He and Isaac ascend the mountain alone. The servants have

no part in the actual sacrifice. They're a three day's journey from home. There's the wood, the fire and the place of sacrifice. But Isaac notices that there's no lamb for the offering. With no animal how will there be sacrifice to God? Abraham tells him, "God will provide".

Shortly though Isaac finds out that he's the sacrifice. Interesting that. See Abraham is 100+ years old by now. Isaac is in his teens most likely. If Isaac thinks this is a bad idea there's not much Abraham can do to wrestle him on to the makeshift altar. A 100 year old man is not going to be able compete with a healthy teenage boy in a struggle. Reason would imagine that Isaac willingly obeys his father and allows himself to be placed on the altar for sacrifice.

There are all kinds of images of God and His Son's sacrifice here. It is father and son. Abraham is willing to give up his son at God's command much like the Father willing give up Christ in sacrifice for us. Isaac complies with his father's wishes just as Christ does. He goes without complaint to what surely seems to be his death and he does so in the faith that God knows what He's doing. Isaac knows the promise that God made to his father about bring salvation through him. Isaac surely knows he is the son of promise. He knows as his father does that some how in some way God will still do what He has promised. It is God. He must keep His promise. God is faithful. He always does what He says He will.

Isaac is bound. He's taken captive as it were. Our Lord too was bound. Arrested and seemingly compelled to comply with the wishes of evil men Jesus was bound and put on trial before Pilate and Caiaphas. Unbeknownst to them

Jesus wasn't compelled by them at all. Had the plan be that He go free Jesus would have gone free. God cannot be compelled to do that which He doesn't want to do. Jesus willingly and without complaint died on the cross. Evil men did not have to make Him give up His life. It's what had to be done in order to save us and so that's what Christ did.

Isaac after he was bound was laid upon wood to be sacrificed. Jesus of course died for our sins upon a bed of wood. The cross was constructed, laid on the ground and the Savior of the world was placed upon it in order that His blood might be shed on our account. The wood cross was then lifted into the air so that our Lord might be lifted up, not in reverence as some high and honored God but as a curse, bearing the sin of all mankind. Our redemption took place with our Lord on a bed of wood high and lifted up.

In all these ways Isaac serves as a type of Christ. He foreshadows what Jesus will do when He suffers and dies for our sins. But there are two important distinctions to make between Isaac's type of Christ and what Christ actually does. Isaac isn't sinless and Isaac doesn't die.

The reason our Lord's sacrifice is acceptable to God is because He was without sin. Jesus didn't lie on the cross because He sinned. He was innocent and holy. He was without transgression. There was no reason for Him to be punished. Isaac couldn't say that. Abraham couldn't say that. You can't say that and neither can I. Isaac, as he lay upon the altar of his father's construction, could not cry out to God "I don't deserve this!" He was a sinner. He deserved whatever he got. Same goes for Abraham.

Both of these men are great examples of faith in humans. They're great examples of GOD GIVEN faith in humans. Yet they're sinners. Jesus was without sin. He is the creator and giver of all faith. Jesus owes no penalty when He's murdered upon the cross by evil men. Jesus was going about paying a penalty that belongs to another, my penalty and your penalty.

Isaac also doesn't die. To be true to the type of Christ Isaac would have had to perish, giving up his life. God doesn't let it go that far. It's a test of Abraham's faith, not a sacrifice of Isaac's blood. Unless the Father would have miraculously raised him Isaac's death would have been the end of him and the promise. If he were a true type of Christ Isaac would have to die. So we arrive at Isaac's question. "*Where's the sacrifice?*"

Abraham says, "*God will provide.*" Abraham in faith understands that God is faithful to His promise. God will keep His covenant. Isaac is the son of promise and he will always be the son of promise. God will provide the sacrifice.

There it is. There's one who has no sin in this thing. There is one who will die. There is one whom the Lord Himself will provide. "*And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."*"

God is true to His Word. Abraham by the grace of God has faith that God will be true to His Word. Blood must be shed for the forgiveness of sins and God

provides it. He doesn't take it from the son of Abraham. God provides it for Himself.

The ram is bound up in a thicket. He is caught, not by the plan of men, but by the will of God. The ram is the innocent sacrifice who has no sin for which to atone. The ram shed his blood at a man's hand. And God accepts the ram's sacrifice and the son of promise lives. The ram is the sacrifice of God.

The ram completes picture of Jesus. He had no sin in the matter. There are no transgressions for which he must die. And yet die he does. Likewise our innocent Lord dies so that another may live. Jesus died so that you might live, not just in time but for eternity. Jesus is God's sacrifice for our sin.

It's true that God tests us, for our benefit, for our faith. But our salvation is sure. Salvation doesn't rest on us. It rests on the One who perfectly bore the burden of our sin. Jesus is the always planned for sacrifice of our sins. In Him alone our sins are forgiven. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen,