

“Moriah to Zion” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent Midweek 2 – March 16, 2022

- I. **Genesis 22:1-14** – previously read, as God calls on Abraham to sacrifice his only son...
- II. **Mountains are my thing**...
 - a. Out of the many amazing sights and wonders throughout the world, I like mountains most of all...
 - i. They are majestic and beautiful....
 - ii. Mountains inspire us... they give us songs and poems... and remind us of God as our Creator.
 - iii. Some people need them close by (or at least within their view...) while others just have to climb them.
 - iv. Maybe you have been on Red Mountain and Molas Passes as you travel in Colorado between Montrose and Durango.
 1. Let me just say, if you are not a fan of heights and driving on the edge of steep cliffs with no guard rail, it is not a sight seeing trip you want to take...
 2. Mountains can be dangerous and menacing when you are trying get over them... just think about the first settlers heading west, looking up at the looming mountains ahead of them – they must have been shaking in their boots
 - b. Now imagine Abraham as he approached Mt Moriah.
 - i. He was the only one who knew what God told him to do... and seeing that mountain in the distance must have been an awful, menacing sight...
 - c. The Lord came to Abraham and told him to take his very own son and offer him up as a sacrifice on an altar on Mount Moriah.
 - i. So what did Abraham do?
 1. He was faithful....against every fiber of his being, he trusted.
 2. He loads up the donkey with wood and heads for Moriah...
 - ii. Can you imagine the turmoil going on in his head during this journey?
 1. Abraham knows the awful truth, and Isaac is clueless.
 2. What do you talk about? How do you act normal when you know that your own child is supposed to die by your hands?
 3. How do you hold back from saying your good-byes without actually giving away the purpose of this whole thing?
 - d. So three days goes by, and Abraham looks up to see the mountain – Mt. Moriah – and the time had come.
- III. **Sin requires sacrifice**.
 - a. I know this is a strange thing for us to understand about God, but we don't make up the rules, we abide by them.
 - b. Blood must be shed to pay the price.... A payment is necessary to satisfy the sin debt.

- c. Just as I've said over the past several weeks, sin is what exiled us from God, and the only way to get home is to pay the price.
- d. God requires blood... and in this case Isaac is the payment.
- e. So Isaac carries the wood he will be sacrificed on as he climbs up with his dad... and he even asks, "Where is the lamb for sacrifice?"
 - i. He knows there is supposed to be an animal for the sacrifice... and he's not seeing it anywhere...
 - ii. Abraham's response had faith written all over it - "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son" (v. 8).
- f. Again, Abraham has faith... and no matter how hard it is... he trusts.
 - i. The Lord will provide the lamb for sacrifice, but is the lamb Isaac?
 - ii. So, he builds the altar and prepares the wood... and binds his son and puts him on it... he raises the knife... and God stops him.
 - iii. A ram is stuck in some bushes and becomes the offering necessary for that day... which ends our reading, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided" (v. 14).
- g. Talk about cutting the tension with a knife... no pun intended... but this is an intense drama.
- h. Not only was the Lord's instruction shocking, but the faith and trust Abraham had to follow through is a story for all of us to remember.
 - i. In fact, the Hebrew people will end up building the temple on this very mountain.
 - ii. Mount Moriah is where God provides... and dwells with His people... and is also known as Mount Zion.
 - iii. It's interesting, but the Hebrews consider this story so important that it has its own name and place in their faith...
 - 1. They call it Aqedah (ah-keh-DAH), which is the Hebrew word for "binding."
 - 2. You see, Isaac is the only Old Testament sacrifice that was ever bound and offered as a living sacrifice... all the others were killed first... their blood sprinkled or poured out, then burned as an offering.
 - 3. In all the Bible, there is only one other offering like this...

IV. **"On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided" (v. 14).**

- a. On a mountain close to Moriah, the sacrifice of God's own Son would be provided on Mount Calvary.
- b. Jesus carried His own wood for the sacrifice as He carried His cross.
- c. Like Isaac, He was a living sacrifice who was bound... only there was no other sacrifice provided... He was nailed to a cross to suffer and die.
- d. Our sin that has exiled us requires payment... blood is required... and the Lord provides.
- e. The three days it took for Abraham to arrive at Mount Moriah to sacrifice Isaac became a different three-day journey for Jesus.

- i. He spent three days in the tomb... but on the third day, He was lifted up to new life and victory over the grave.
 - f. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
 - i. God provided His Son, His only Son, as the sacrifice required for sin, and all who believe in Him will never perish or remain in exile.
 - ii. In other words, God provides everlasting life, on this mountain.
- V. **Mount Moriah to Mount Zion—as we return from exile.**
 - a. Sin exiled us from God’s presence, but we have been restored and returned by the sacrifice and blood of His Son Jesus.
 - b. By the way, Mount Zion is actually another name for heaven.
 - i. God used the death of His Son to open the gates to eternal life on Mount Zion... in fact, as the temple was presence of God who was behind the veiled curtain... upon Jesus’ death the curtain or veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom.
 - ii. God gave full access to His presence by Jesus’ sacrifice...
 - c. The best part is that Mount Zion – or heaven – is the same for us... we will be given full access to eternal life as God’s presence is always with us.
 - d. As Revelation 21:3 says, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.”
 - e. On this mountain, Mount Zion, the Lord provides. In Jesus’ name. Amen.¹

¹ based on the sermon series, “Return from Exile: A Lenten Journey,” Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, 2017.