

“The Good News of a Savior Who Gives Himself for Us”

Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent Midweek 4 – March 26, 2025

- I. **Genesis 22:13-14** – ¹³ And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ 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.”
- II. **Modern Bibles use headings to help us understand what follows.**
 - a. Depending on the Bible you read, it will have headings like in Genesis 1, “The Creation of the World,” or in Acts 2, “The Coming of the Holy Spirit,” or “Moses and the Burning Bush,” in Exodus chapter 3.
 - i. In some versions of the Bible for our reading today, it says, “Abraham Tested”.
 1. That might seem reasonable, but we may want to come up with a different heading when we read through the story more carefully.
 - ii. When you walk through the whole journey of Abraham leading to the birth of his son Isaac, this reading today becomes all the more challenging as we wonder what God is up to.
- III. **Abraham has lived an amazing life up to this point.**
 - a. You can read about Abraham, or Abram, which was his name before God changed it, starting at the end of Genesis chapter 11.
 - b. It all begins with Abram being called by God out of the land of Haran, and he simply believed and went to the land of Canaan – or what we know as the Promised Land.
 - c. He was 75 years old when he began this journey, and a big part of the promise God made to him was that he would have an offspring, and he would be the father of a great nation.
 - i. The challenge was that he was 99 when God said his son would be born... and within a year, Isaac had finally arrived.
 - ii. Sarah (or Sarai) by that time was 90 and was barren her whole life to that point – so Isaac was a complete and total miracle.
 - iii. The story weaves and winds its way through Abraham and Sarah’s many adventures, including their choice to have the maidservant Hagar have a child with Abraham because they didn’t believe that God could provide them with their own child.
 - iv. So, reading the prior nine chapters up to this point, the tension is building as to when God would finally come through with this promised offspring... and it’s almost like you let out a sigh of relief for these poor people – talk about having to be patient!
 - d. Yet, then we get to this strange and difficult story, as it says in the first verse, “God tested Abraham” and told him to take his son and sacrifice him.

- i. Again, if we stop at this point, then the heading is absolutely correct in our bibles – “Abraham Tested” – however, there is much more to the story.
- IV. **I don't know about you**, but I my head would be spinning if I was Abraham!
 - a. All these journeys, promises, and even visits from God, and now this?
 - i. The promise to make a great nation from this son, along with the fact that Isaac came through such challenging and unlikely circumstances make the Lord's request... well... outrageous... even bizarre.
 - 1. What could God possibly have in mind?
 - ii. So, yes, we could say that the Lord tested Abraham... but more than that, the end of the story explains that Abraham named that place, “The Lord will provide.”
 - 1. Abraham didn't say on this day the Lord has tested me... He said, “The Lord will provide,” and even today people are reminded, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”
 - b. It's kind of funny, but since we are talking about headings that don't always help us in our bibles, one of the versions actually says, “The Sacrifice of Isaac” for this story.
 - i. There's only one problem here... Isaac was not sacrificed!
 - ii. The reason he was not sacrificed is because the Lord provides!
 - iii. Abraham was willing to give up his son that day if the Lord required him to do it, but Isaac was not sacrificed because God provided a substitute... God delivered Isaac and kept His promise to make him a great nation.
 - iv. God even repeats His promise, “¹⁷I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (vv 17-18)
 - v. Through Abraham, Isaac, and on down the line, all the nations of the earth would be blessed.
 - vi. This is why Abraham didn't say, “The Lord has provided,” but he said, “The Lord will provide,” even after Isaac was saved.
 - 1. It seems that Abraham understood that the Lord would provide not only now, but also in a very real way in the future.
 - c. The greatest promise of all is that the Lord would provide a Savior from the line of Abraham for the entire world.
- V. **It is easy to see the connection of this story to our Lord Jesus Christ.**
 - a. Abraham being called to sacrifice his only son on Mount Moriah foreshadows the reality that God sacrificed His own Son on Mount Calvary.
 - i. Just as God provided for Isaac's deliverance by giving a substitute, He would provide the great Substitute for all nations, and that includes us.

- ii. A ram was provided for Abraham, but the Lamb was provided for us.
- b. When you think about it, if we didn't have the Substitute in Jesus for our sins, we would deserve what Isaac didn't receive...
 - i. You could say that we are tied up by our sins... we have no way of escaping this sin by our own power.
 - 1. And the knife is the judgment we deserve as the just punishment for our sins... the wages of our sin is death.
 - ii. But instead, the Lord provides a way out... He stops the knife, cuts through the bonds of sin that have us all tied up... and sets us free.
 - iii. Yet, our freedom wasn't free... it came with the cost of God's own Son, the Lamb of God taking our place.
- c. In the greatest exchange of all time, God provided a Lamb as our sacrificial substitute... His own Son, Jesus Christ.
 - i. God the Father, who did not require Abraham's son, gave up His own Son for us so that we would not perish, but have eternal life.

- VI. **Our Genesis story isn't about the sacrifice of Isaac**, or mainly about the testing of Abraham.
- a. Sure, it shows God's amazing faithfulness to Abraham... but much more than that... it points to the cross of Christ.
 - b. We see Mount Calvary all over this story as Jesus saved us by giving Himself as our substitute.
 - c. Maybe it's worth considering a new heading for what God has done in this Genesis story for us... how about, "The Lord Saves by Providing a Sacrificial Substitute."
 - i. I don't know, maybe just putting a simple cross at the top of this story would make the point as clearly as anything.
 - ii. Regardless of what the heading reads, the important thing is to see that God was giving us a foreshadowing of Jesus and our salvation... this story points to Jesus.
 - d. John 3:16 tells us that Jesus was given out of God's pure love for us, John also says much later in his Gospel that the Bible was written (just like our story from Genesis today) "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:31)
 - i. In the saving name of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Amen.¹

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