

“The Father Sacrifices His Son”

Text: Genesis 22:1-19

By Pastor Rand Lankheet, at New Horizon URC, First sermon, on April 29, 2018

Introduction: It's very difficult to wait. To be patient. Children and teens might find it difficult to wait for their birthday, to become a year older. Adults might find it difficult to wait for a job promotion, or a job change. Or to wait for a medical diagnosis. It is very difficult for us to wait.

-Well, Abraham and Sarah had to wait a long time. We read that Abraham was 75 years old when God called him to the Promised Land. God had promised to give him many descendants. But what a long time he had to wait. He waited about 25 years before he had a child with Sarah. It was a long, long time to wait.

-In Genesis chapter 22, we find the promised son, Isaac, is now a teenager.

He is probably 13 or 14 years old. And we read that God tells Abraham to kill Isaac. To offer up his son as a sacrifice (祭物). God has his reasons for that. He's going to be testing Abraham's faith. And, God is going to teach Abraham something about a later son, God's own son.

The Lord Jesus Christ.

So let us consider three things: first, the son; second, the father; and third, the sacrifice.

1. The son. The son Isaac.

1.A. In the words of vs. 2 God indicates how much Abraham loved his son. “Take your son, Abraham... take your only son Isaac, whom you LOVE.” Obviously, Abraham would have loved his son. It was the only son he had left, after he removes his other son, Ishmael, from the household. And, of course, Isaac is his only son by his beloved wife, Sarah.

And, remember, this is the son through whom all of God's promises depend.

God had promised that Abraham's descendants were going to become as numerous as the sand on the seashore, and as the stars in the sky. If Abraham is going to have that many descendants, everything, everything depends upon Isaac.

Not only that. There is also God's promise the all the nations of the earth will be blessed through Abraham. That promised blessing is also dependent on Isaac.

And as we have seen, that blessing is going to be accomplished through Jesus.

So, humanly speaking, for Jesus to be born, someday, that, too, depends on Isaac.

How confusing, then, when Abraham hears God commanding him to kill Isaac.

To offer Isaac as a human sacrifice on top of a mountain. How confusing this command of God. Yet, we read that Abraham rose up early the next morning and took Isaac to that place. That place of sacrifice.

It takes three days to travel there. Along the way, no doubt Abraham and his beloved son Isaac spend some time in deep conversation. Finally, as they are climbing up the mountain, Isaac asks about the sacrifice. Isaac sees that they have packed the wood and the fire, but they have no lamb. No lamb for the sacrifice. “Where is it, father? Where is the lamb to be sacrificed?”

Abraham answers truthfully: Vs. 8: “God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering (燔祭).”

God will provide His own lamb for sacrifice.

Then look at what follows, in verse 9. Look especially how obedient Isaac is.

Abraham builds an altar (祭坛), probably with stones, with rocks. He lays out the wood on top of it. And then he turns to his son with the ropes. He ties up Isaac. Isaac does not resist.

Isaac does not argue. Isaac does not run away.

Now, evidently by this time, Abraham had told him more. About God's command.

There is something interesting we read about this in the New Testament, in Hebrews chapter 11. Hebrews 11 verse 19 says that Abraham concluded that God was able to raise his son from the dead. Perhaps Abraham shared that with his son, Isaac.

But Isaac allows himself to be tied up, and to be laid out on top of that altar. That's an obedient son. A son who obeys his father to the point of death. A son who is willing to give up his life, in obedience to his father. And in obedience to God's command.

Brothers and sisters, this points us to Jesus. Philippians chapter 2 says that Jesus was obedient to His Father, obedient to death. To give himself as sacrifice on that cross.

And, remember, how God spoke of Jesus? As Jesus began his public ministry (事工) ? God the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mt. 3:17). Like Isaac, Jesus is the only son, the only begotten of the Father. And He is the beloved Son. Beloved from all eternity (永恒) .

-Jesus also shows himself to be the obedient Son.

Fully obedient even to death, to death on that cross, sacrificing himself.

Isaac, with Abraham, is teaching us about Jesus. The loved son is pointing us forward to the

Beloved Son. The only son is point us forward to the Only Begotten Son of the Father.

And, interestingly, we know that God the Father raised His Son to life, again, after he had died.

Isaac and Abraham are hoping for that, for themselves, knowing God had the power to raise the dead back to life. And God showed that power in raising Jesus.//

2. So, that is the son. Let us now turn more specifically TO THE FATHER. To Father Abraham.

How this scene must have tortured Abraham. Tying up his son. Laying him on top of the word.

And vs. 10 tells us Abraham was even raising up the knife to kill his son.

Remember, this is the son for whom Abraham and his wife had waited for 25 years.

This is the son that had brought laughter and joy to their home. This is the son who had grown up, from a baby, circumcised (受割礼) on the 8th day, to a teenage boy. As the years went by Abraham's love and affection for his son had grown all the more.

I'm reminded of the words of Jesus. In John chapter 15. Jesus says to his disciples: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you." As the Father, my Father, has loved me. God the Father loved His Son not just for 13 or 14 years. But God the Father loved His Son from all eternity. The Only Begotten Son, Beloved by the Father, from all eternity.

Humanly speaking, how easy it would have been for God the Father to have taken His Son back again! How easy to have pulled him back at the last minute, as Jesus prayed in the Garden. "Father, my beloved Father, take this cup of suffering away from me." How easy for the Father, on some level, to have done that. To have spared his Son such a horrible death.

And a horrible death as a Sacrifice for whom? For sinners...for worthless, depraved (败坏的) ,

perverse (堕落的) , twisted (扭曲的) , creatures, such as we are. Was it worth it, really? To give up the Beloved Son, for such sinners? To give up Jesus, for you? For me? How could that be worth it, for the Father?

But something of God Himself is seen in Abraham. Abraham was considered by God a righteous man. Abraham was credited with God's own righteousness. And Abraham then lived in that righteousness.

God, likewise, had to do what was right. Someone had to pay for human sin. God could not just turn away and say it was OK. Someone had to pay. And that someone, the only someone, would be His Son, Jesus. Taking our sin and earning righteousness for us. Jesus would be the only one to do that. So that ultimately God Himself would be proven righteous, fair, just.

Just as Abraham did not hesitate, but rose up early the next morning, so God the Father did not hesitate. Though He loved His Son, it was the only way. The only way for us to be saved.

3. Now, let us look at THE SACRIFICE. The sacrifice.

This was a required sacrifice. It was not optional (可选的) . God had commanded this of Abraham:

"Abraham, you must offer your son, as a sacrifice." There was no misunderstanding, no confusion.

Interestingly, we read in James chapter 2, that Abraham showed his faith by his works. Though good words don't save us, our works do show that we are saved. Obedient works show our love for God, our trust in God. Even Jesus says: "If you love me, if you really love me, you will keep my commandments."

Would Abraham prove his faith? Prove his love for God? By offering up the thing he loved most in his life? Abraham would. And he did. He came within just a few seconds of plunging the knife into the bound body of his son.

And in this regard, Abraham is pointing us to Jesus.

Would Jesus go all the way—even to death on that cruel cross? Even to having His Father abandon him, for a time? Would Jesus prove himself obedient, fully righteous? Jesus would. And He did. He embraced

death. The worst kind of death, that only criminals suffered in that day. Jesus, the Living Lord, gave up His body to death, so that it was buried for those three days. Jesus did it. Fully obedient. The righteous one for unrighteous people.

And now, in Genesis 22, we see another beautiful picture.

The angel stops Abraham, just in time. Isaac will not be killed. Because Abraham showed God that he was fully willing to give him up, completely, even to death.

Isaac is released from his bonds; he is untied. And as he is being untied, Abraham looks, and sees something amazing. A ram, a male sheep or goat, has been caught by his horns, in the underbrush. In verse 13, last part, we read: "So Abraham went and took the ram (公羊), and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son."

That's substitution (代替). The ram took Isaac's place, on that altar. And that ram was "provided."

That is, "provided by the Lord." We read in vs. 14, that became a saying for many years afterward. "Jehovah-Jireh." "On the mountain of the Lord, it shall be provided."

You see how wonderfully this points us, again, to Jesus. In fact, Jesus says in John chapter 8:

"Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." Abraham was learning something about Jesus sin this moment. Oh he maybe didn't understand it fully. But he learned something.

That is, we should have died. We should have perished (灭亡), each of us, for our sins. But God provided a Ram, a Lamb, a male sheep. "Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!"

Isaac was not killed on that day. So, we will not be killed, for our sins, under the judgement of God. But God Himself has provided us a Lamb, a Ram, to take our place. Jesus was laid on the altar of the cross, and gave himself. For us. In our place. And we are set free. It is almost as if the tight ropes are untied, loosened from us. We are lifted up from the wood of that altar. We are set on our feet again. We are given life, new life.

Because God Himself has provided for us a Lamb, even Jesus Christ.

There's another lesson, here, a lesson about giving up that which is dearest to us. For the sake of our God. For the cause of our God. Jesus says this in the New Testament: "... everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Mt. 19:28-29).

We want to keep holding on to earthly things... even good earthly things. We want to keep holding on to our children, and to our parents. That's natural. That's good. But, God had to teach Abraham something important. That he had to be willing to let go of his son, his only son, his loved son. All for the sake of God. For the sake of loving God above all else.

I don't know how the Lord is teaching you that lesson today. But you can make a god, an idol (偶像), of your spouse, of your children, or of your parents, or, really of anything that is good. You can love these people so much, that God is put in second place, and they come in first place.

But, of course, that is the wrong order. God must always come in first place. "No other gods before me," He says.

So there will be times, when God will be teaching you, to put Himself first. That as much as you love you love your spouse, your children, your parents... you must show that you love God even more. Even more. And think of it, really. What is your spouse, your children, your parents, in comparison with eternity? You have them for what? 50, 60, 70 years?

But God is forever. Jesus is forever. The kingdom of God is for all eternity.

Yes, it is good to love your son, your daughter, your husband, your wife.

But, it is even better to love God, to love Jesus. More than anything, or anyone.

LET US PRAY.