

Sermon Transcript for Fifth Sunday in Lent, Judica, March 21, 2021

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. All right. We have some rather challenging passages to get through, so we're going to just dive into it. Here we have Jesus in the Gospel, and He is confronting the people and basically accusing them of not knowing God and being children of the Devil. Because if they had actually known God, they would listen to Him and they would believe Him. So we have Jesus defending the truth, even if it is threatening to the people who are hearing it, even if it is difficult for them to hear, even if it offends them, Jesus speaks the truth about their situation, that they have not heard the Word of God. They have not heard Him and they have not believed Him. And so, therefore, they indeed are following after Satan himself.

Now, they try and deflect it like anybody, "Oh, it's not really about me. You're really a Samaritan and a demon possessed person." They push it out there. They're like, "Well, hopefully this trends, and people will actually believe that. And listen to that rather than what Jesus is saying about us." I mean, it's kind of what they're doing. They're trying to deflect the blame and say, "Well, we're really the good people. He just doesn't know what He's talking about. He's demon possessed, after all, and a Samaritan, so you don't have to listen to Him."

But again, they're not actually listening to His words. They're not actually taking what He has to say and evaluating it and seeing if it is true. Again, this section of Scripture comes almost immediately after these people caught somebody in adultery. They caught a woman in adultery, and they were getting ready to stone her. And Jesus comes in and He scribbles in the dirt. And then He says, "You who have no sin cast the first stone." Now, what was He scribbling in the dirt? We don't know. Maybe it was just scribbling. Maybe this is what someone said. Maybe He wrote the individual sins of the people that were getting ready to throw the stones. And they saw that and they go, "Ooh. Yeah, maybe we don't need to go there."

We don't know exactly. We can't prove it. But anyway, this is the case where He confronted them and basically forced them to admit that even though they had caught this woman in adultery, they also were sinners as well. And that did not sit too well with them. And then He goes on to say that "I am the truth and the light and anybody who believes in Me will live." And then we get into this passage. And it gets to the point where He says, "Abraham rejoiced that he would see My day and he saw it and was glad."

So I'm going to leave you there with the New Testament. We're going to back up to the Old Testament and Abraham and will finish out the Gospel at the end. But here we have Abraham. Abraham is well into his old age. Isaac is now roughly 13 years old, or so. So that means Abraham is about 110, 115 years old, give or take. And so, he's got his child, Isaac, whom he loves, he absolutely loves. And this is the child of the promise. This is the child that actually came from Sarah's womb. And it's important to remember that Abraham, even though he believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness, he wasn't very consistent necessarily in following through on that belief.

There were many times in his life where God said some things, and Abraham had some doubts. I mean, the fact that Isaac was born, Abraham had doubts. After 10 years of God promising that

he would have a son, nothing was still happening. So somewhere along that line, in those 10 years, he says, "You know what? I'm going to take matters into my own hands." And so, he has a child with Hagar. And we know all that chaos that produced and continues to be produced. But then there was a time where they were traveling, and Abraham was afraid that the Pharaoh would take Sarah for his wife and kill him. And so, he told Sarah to lie and say, "Hey, this is my brother. So, take care of my brother and we'll be good."

So there were several times in Abraham's life where he took his trust and he put it upon himself. He said, "You know what? I'm not sure God's really got this. So I'm going to try and figure out a way around. I'm going to figure out how I can protect myself." Now, you and I might be a little bit familiar with that ourselves. How many times in our lives did we face situations where we're not completely certain God knows what He's doing? Now, we may not say that so boldly and so baldly, but the fact of the matter is, we worry and we fret and we try and plan and scheme and figure out how we are going to solve the problem. Basically, we're saying, "Well, God, I don't really trust You to take care of this," when we worry and we doubt and we fear. But here we have God, after all these many years and after testing and trying Abraham, and Abraham's seen God's faithfulness through all these decades of life, God calls to him once more. And He says, "Abraham, I want you to take your son, your only son. And I want you to sacrifice him in the place where I call you to be." Now, I cannot imagine a harder thing that has ever been said to any individual. And I'm not sure how I would have reacted. I'd love to say, Oh, I've got faith, just like Abraham. And I could do that, but really what is going on here? It's hard to understand how God would force Abraham to think about the possibility of sacrificing his son.

But yet, God demands everything of us. God demands our lives, our children's lives, our livelihood, our well-being, our hope, our health, our security, everything. Our money, our time. He demands everything. God says, "This is mine. You are mine." And He expects us to trust Him with it all, trust Him that He will do what is right and good, including the lives of our children. Do we give them up to the Lord? Do we make sure that they know God? And are we willing, would we be willing to give up our lives or the lives of our children if that's where God guided us?

I don't know. I'm not sure I have a good answer for that. I know that's what God calls us to do. We can talk about being in the will of God and following Him when everything's going well and smoothly, and we don't have to make any sacrifices. But when we have to make sacrifices, do we still believe that God's will is good?

You have Abraham and he's taking his son and they're going up to the mountain and they find the mountain and they go up. And Abraham's got the knife and he's got the fire in his hands. He puts the wood on Isaac's back. They walk up the hill and Isaac is looking around going, "Dad, I see the fire. I'm carrying the wood. Where is the sacrifice?" And you got to figure that Isaac's going, "Okay. Something here is not making sense. I'm just not getting a good feeling about all of this." And Abraham's answer, "God will provide for Himself, the lamb for burnt offering, my son." So they both went together.

Abraham believed that God would provide. Now, how was God going to provide that? He didn't know. We find out elsewhere that perhaps he thought that God would raise his son back from

the dead, or somehow show His might and power in some way, shape, or form. All he knew was that in all of these decades, God had proved Himself to be faithful. And that God would continue to be faithful, no matter what. So he put Isaac on the altar and had the knife all the way up, ready to slaughter his son, is what they say.

Can you imagine what was going on in that moment? And yet, Abraham trusted, even in that moment, that God would provide. Again, did he have a clue how? No, but he trusted that God would provide. And then a voice comes from heaven says, "Abraham, Abraham, don't sacrifice your son. I know that you trust Me. And you fear Me above all things." Now, you can just imagine Abraham's sigh of relief. Now, I can't imagine how the relationship was then restored between Abraham and Isaac.

But here, no matter how all of this fits together, no matter how challenging this passage is, we and Abraham get an image of the coming of the Messiah in this passage. This is what Jesus is talking about when He says that, "Abraham saw My day and rejoiced that he would see it." You can almost think that he saw it in that moment when he realized that he did not have to sacrifice his son, that God would provide. And he was relieved. And looking back, he also thought God is going to provide for the future as well. Because if you listen carefully, this was not fully fulfilled on that day. Abraham was prophetic in his words, and we should hear a lot of prophecy in the images of this passage.

First off, after three days, they came to the mountain and saw where God had guided them. Now, three days might sound familiar to you. Something rather miraculous happened on the third day. And then you have the son, the offspring of Abraham, carrying the wood on his back. And it should remind you that the offspring of Abraham, the One who was chosen, carried the wood of the cross on His back. And you hear the words of Abraham, "God will provide for Himself, the Lamb."

Well, in Abraham's day, it was actually a ram that God provided for the sacrifice, not a lamb. And in fact, for some scholars who want to believe that the Bible is a bunch of manmade myths and stories, they will take this passage and will say, "See, they didn't have a clue what they were talking about. They got confused. One of the authors wrote lamb and another editor somewhere along the line wrote ram. And they didn't check it. And they got it wrong. Obviously, this isn't God's Word." Except Abraham was not talking about his day right here, right now. He was talking about the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

You see, the ram was a partial fulfillment, but it was not the full fulfillment of the prophecy that he spoke, even if he didn't know he was speaking it. God Himself will provide for a Lamb. Now, God did not force Abraham to offer up his son. God released him from that burden, but He didn't release Himself from the burden. He did offer up His only Son, whom He loved. He did sacrifice His Son, but not to show His glory and might and majesty, but to show His grace and love and mercy. He held himself to a greater demand. He did and was and is willing to give up His Son to sacrifice for us. He gave up everything for the sake of our redemption.

God, the Son, was in Heaven. Life was good. And yet, He humbled Himself and became like us so that He might suffer and die. So even if we can't figure out exactly how Abraham got through this, we do know that God was willing to give up all for us. And He calls us to trust Him and give everything that we are to Him, because He has done it. He has promised, this is the day that

Abraham was looking for. This is a day, Christ coming is a day that Abraham was hoping for, the day that he was rejoicing in. Because even if he had sacrificed Isaac, it would have done us no good. It wouldn't have solved our problem of sin. It wouldn't even solve Isaac's problem of sin. But the day of the Lord, Jesus Christ coming, that day would solve the sins of the world and the problem that comes from it. It would defeat death. And so, He makes it clear Abraham indeed was looking forward to the day, because before Abraham was, I am. See, the voice that spoke to Abraham and said, "Abraham, Abraham, I know that you fear me." That was God's voice. That was the voice of the Lord. And here is the voice coming and becoming flesh and fulfilling, fulfilling what Abraham almost did with the sacrifice of his son.

He is our great high priest. His blood does more than cover us. It washes us clean. And He desires us to trust Him and give everything to Him; our life, our children, our hopes, our fears, everything. Trust him. He will provide because He loves us, and He gave up His Son for us. May His grace and mercy and peace be and abide with you always, now and forever more, unto life everlasting. Amen.