

## Sermon Transcript for April 3, 2022

**Readings:** Genesis 22: 1-14, Hebrews 9: 11-15, John 8: 42-59

### ***Jesus Is Our Redemption***

In the temple Jesus said, *"If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death"* (John 8:51). For Jesus came to taste death for us—to drink the cup of suffering to the dregs in order that we might be released from its power. Clinging to His life-giving words, we are delivered from death's sting and its eternal judgment. Christ is our High Priest, who entered the Most Holy Place and with His own blood obtained everlasting redemption for His people (Heb. 9:11–15). He is the One who was before Abraham was, and yet is his descendant. He is the promised Son who carries the wood up the mountain for the sacrifice, who is bound and laid upon the altar of the cross. He is the ram who is offered in our place, who is willingly caught in the thicket of our sin, and who wears the crown of thorns upon His head (Gen. 22:1–14). Though Jesus is dishonored by the sons of the devil, He is vindicated by the Father through the cross.

### **Sermon:**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

We have a lot to unpack in these three passages, so we're just going to get right into it. So, first off, let's look into the book of Genesis. We have this amazing story of Abraham offering up his son, or almost offering up his son, Isaac, because God had told him to sacrifice his very own son, his only son whom he loved.

Now, every parent who has ever heard this story just balks at this whole idea, the concept of taking your first born and binding them up and putting them on an altar and taking a knife and plunging it into their heart. It just seems beyond belief. How in the world could a loving God demand that Abraham do this? Well, the fact of the matter is, He did not demand that Abraham do this, but he did want Abraham to understand how far he could trust his God.

If you remember Abraham's history, Abraham was not exactly the most consistent in his trust in God. He would waver at various times, and it brought him into all sorts of trouble. But as he grew in the faith, and as he grew in his understanding of God, he understood that God could be trusted no matter what, including the idea of even bringing his son back to life if that were the case. He trusted that God would do what needed to be done. Or maybe he actually did believe that God would provide the lamb at the very end. We're not sure exactly what was going on in Abraham's head. All we know is what he said to his son, Isaac. "God Himself will provide the lamb."

Now, let's look into the story. They're going along. They're walking towards this land of Moriah, and they're looking up to a mountaintop. When they get close, Abraham takes the wood that they're going to use for the sacrifice and places it upon his only begotten son, his only son.

Now, if you're beginning to hear some connections between God and his only Son, Jesus, and Abraham and his only son, Isaac, you're getting the right idea. The whole point of this is, one, to test Abraham. Not that God was in any doubt. "Well, does Abraham really trust Me or not? I think I need to give him a trial to figure that out." No, God knew the heart of Abraham, knew what Abraham believed, but Abraham didn't fully understand what Abraham believed.

See, through trials and testing, that is when our faith comes out most clearly. That is when we truly learn how much we can put our trust in our God. When things seem to be going awry, when nothing seems to be going right, when all hope is lost, that is where we truly understand what it means to trust God above all things. So this was a test to help Abraham understand what was going on.

So they go, and he lays the wood on Isaac. Isaac is looking around. "Okay, I see fire and I see wood, but I don't see a sacrifice." He's 13 years old or so, give or take. You can think that Isaac is putting two and two together and going, "Something does not sound right here." So he gets up to the top, and he binds his son and places him on the altar, gets ready to plunge the knife. At that point, God speaks, where it says the Angel of the Lord calls from heaven, "'Abraham, Abraham,' and he says, 'Here am I.'"

Can you imagine Isaac being bound, his thoughts at that time? Can you imagine Abraham's thoughts at binding his only son? This was traumatic. Yet from this, we get a clear, probably the clearest, picture and prophecy of what God is going to do through His Son, Jesus Christ, anywhere in Scripture. This already happens in Genesis chapter 22. In the very first book of the Old Testament, we get a very clear picture of what God is going to do because God gave up His only Son. He didn't ask Abraham to do anything that He was not willing to do Himself, and in fact did. God bound His Son to human flesh. The almighty God, the eternal Son of God who has been with the Father for all of eternity and is equal with God in all ways, He is now bound and humiliated in the form of a human. Not humiliation that He didn't want, but He humbled Himself. He became so much less as far as demonstrating His power. I mean, the God of the universe in an infant child. How does that even take place? But He was bound so that He lived as a human, like you and me, familiar with the trials and tribulations of life, hungered and thirst and wept and mourned just like you and me so that He might redeem you and me because He was bound to the flesh. He was connected to the flesh of mankind.

When I read this this week, this is the first time that I really saw this clearly. But if you look at how the Angel of the Lord speaks, he says, "'Abraham, Abraham,' and he says, 'Here am I.' And the Angel of the Lord says, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God seeing that you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.'"

The Angel of the Lord, who is that? That is God Himself. That's the second person of the Trinity. That is the Son of God speaking to Abraham. So Jesus Christ, before He became flesh, saved Isaac because He was going to come and save all of humanity. Because Jesus is the high priest; He is the one that has come into the more perfect tent. Here we get the image of the tabernacle and the temple going on. The high priest, the only one that can enter the Holy of Holies, the only one that can be in the presence of God, and then only once a year, that is Christ. And now, He is between us and God, but not because of the blood of the lambs that were slaughtered, but because of His very own blood.

In the Old Testament, the blood that was sacrificed at the temple, all those many days, year in and year out, all that blood did nothing but cover the sins because God in His grace said, "Okay. I look out and I see the blood that you have offered in faith, and I will recognize that blood as faith in the Son of God who is going to come." See the blood of lambs wasn't able to forgive. Only the blood of the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. The blood of the Old Testament covered the sins. The blood of Christ washes away the sin. All of those Old Testament sacrifices were holding patterns waiting for the fulfillment that was promised already here in Genesis chapter 22, that Christ would come and be the high priest.

And no longer are we purified by the sprinkling of blood. That was another old practice that they did in the Old Testament. "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." The reason it's hyssop, hyssop is a branch, a tree with a bunch of branches, like a broom-type thing. They dipped the hyssop branch in the blood, and then they literally sprinkled the blood on the people so that they were covered in the blood.

Yuck. Yeah, exactly. Yuck. It was disgusting. No, literally. Think about this. Think if I came and I had a bowl of blood, and I started sprinkling blood on you. You'd go, "That's gross." Why? Because we recognize that an animal had to be killed for that and that the life that gave life to that animal, and now that animal is dead. Now that dead animal's blood is upon us. But the idea was that the blood of the Lamb, the Lamb of God, would not just cover us or sprinkle us, but would wash us and cleanse us free from our sin.

Isaac was saved by that same blood of Christ when the Son of God came and said, "You have not withheld your only son from me." The trust in the Messiah who was to come because He is the great high priest. Not only is He the one that goes into the Holy of Holies, He is also the one who sacrifices Himself in the Holy of Holies so that we might have access to God, so that He might be our mediator between God and man.

Before we get into of the Gospel too much, I want to look at Abraham's words. He says, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for burnt offering, my son." Then when God speaks, Abraham turns around and there's a ram. Now, if you're listening closely, Abraham said lamb, but it was a ram that showed up. Was the writer of Genesis just confused on which one it was going to be, a lamb or a ram and we're not sure? No, the ram was there as a sacrifice for this moment. But what Abraham was saying, even if he didn't know he was saying it, was that God is going to provide the lamb. The ram wasn't the answer to Abraham's comment. It was the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, that was the fulfillment of Abraham's comment, "God Himself will provide a lamb." In fact, the lamb will be God Himself for the forgiveness of our sins.

See, we have this great and amazing high priest, who through His blood is now the mediator and promises us eternal life. And just to make it clear that Jesus knew what He was doing and He truly was the Son of God, we've got this Gospel lesson, where He's talking about He is the one who has come, and Abraham rejoiced to see His day. I think on that time when Isaac was about to be sacrificed and the Word of God came to Abraham, he saw, maybe not in fullness, but he saw that God would replace the sacrifice, that God would provide redemption to all of us. And He does in His Son. And Jesus himself says, "Look, Abraham rejoiced when He saw my day, because before Abraham was, I am." He was making a clear and definite statement that He was God. That's why they picked up the stones and were ready to throw it at Him because they thought He was speaking blasphemy. But He wasn't because He was indeed God. And Abraham saw God on that day. He heard God. He heard Jesus. He heard the Son.

Now, it also says, "Anybody that believes in Me will never taste death." Now, do we honestly believe that we are not going to taste death? We should. Will our eyes close at the end of this life? Yes, they will. But you notice when the New Testament talks about the Christians who die, it doesn't say death. We don't face death. We fall asleep in Christ. As Christians, we do not die. We fall asleep in Christ because we will wake up. When we wake up, it will be the new heavens and the new earth. We will be in paradise with all of our loved ones, but most importantly, with that Son who has come to redeem us and give us love and salvation. So no, we do not face death, at least not as the people of this

world understand. Death is permanent in their eyes. Death is to be feared. For a Christian, death is not permanent, and death is not to be feared because in the right terminology, we as Christians do not face death. We face sleep. We fall asleep in Christ, and we wake up in Christ. Blessed be the name of the Lord. That is why Abraham rejoiced in seeing the day of Jesus come, and that is why we rejoice always in our salvation.

So no matter what may come, no matter what we may face, no matter what trials and tribulations we may go through, no matter how desperate our life seems, no matter how far we are gone and we seem like we're on the last hope and the very end of our rope as Abraham was as he's about to plunge the knife into Isaac, God's Word comes and comforts us and says that He is with us and that He is now mediating between us and God the Father. Because He is the mediator, we are free, free from sin, free from fear, free from doubt, free from worry, even free from death.

May that grace and that mercy and that peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.