

Rev. Matthew Versemann
Trinity Lutheran Church
Decatur, Illinois
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“SACRIFICING YOUR ONLY SON”

God’s PEACE is ALWAYS YOURS in Jesus.

Genesis 22,

“The Lord said to Abraham, ‘Take your son, your only son – Isaac - whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering, on one of the mountains I will show you.....When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son, Isaac, and laid him.....on top of the wood. *Abraham then reached out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, ‘Abraham! Abraham!.....Do not lay a hand on the boy!.....Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from ME your only son!’*”

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

What Abraham was asked to do, God’s done!
He’s offered up His Only Son!

In Genesis 12, God stripped Abraham of his past, saying, “*Leave your country, your people, and your father’s house, and go to the land I will show you.....I will make you into a great nation.....and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through you...So Abraham left, as the Lord had told him.*” No-Matter-What FAITH! Vulnerable confidence. All-Or-Nothing Trust. Believing without evidence! Genesis 15 says, “*Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness!*”

But now God comes back a second time, and this time to strip Abraham of his future, with a request that would send painful shivers down the spine of any parent. Gen. 22, ***“Take your son, your only son – Isaac - whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on the mountain I will show you!”***

The God Who promised, ***“I will give you and Sarah a son, from your own body..... thru whom all the nations of the world will be blessed,”*** and kept His promise when Isaac was born, becomes the God of a dreadful command, ***“Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and sacrifice him as a burnt offering.”*** The loving Lord makes an outrageous request that demands faith, or drives one to bitter unbelief. So what’s it going to be for Abraham, you and me? What the Lord wants to give Abraham and each of us is a: No-Matter-What FAITH! Vulnerable Confidence, All-Or-Nothing Trust, Believing Without Evidence. The Lord won’t let you ride the fence. You’ll either truly trust in Jesus, and save your life; or blow off Jesus, and lose your life!

I admit. Holding onto Jesus with a No-Matter-What faith isn’t easy; especially when all of the evidence in your life seems to be shouting ***“God Doesn’t Care!”: sufferings that defy explanation, prayers that seem to go unanswered.*** But what gives us a No-Matter-What Faith is that we have a No-Matter-What Savior. Hebrews 7, ***“Jesus died, once, and for all;”*** No-Matter-What you and I have done! 1st John 1:7, ***“The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness,”*** No-Matter-What sins we’ve committed. Jesus went to hell and back to save us, No-Matter-What. Mark 15, ***‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’*** Jesus already defeated the devil for us No-Matter-What. Rev. 12, ***“We overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb.”*** And since death did not defeat Jesus, it will not defeat us, John 11, ***“I AM the Resurrection and the Life, whoever believes in Me will live, even if he dies!”*** No-Matter-What!

The reason the Lord sends terrible testings, and allows us to face problems we cannot solve, is to drive us back to Him, so that He can then meet our trials and testings with His grace and mercy, and through that process He works in us a: No-Matter-What FAITH! Vulnerable Confidence, All-Or-Nothing Trust, Believing Without Evidence. As contrary as it may sound, God allows or even sends sufferings to strengthen our faith, by driving us to the point that we have no one else to turn to but Jesus. ***“Who Will It Be Abraham? Isaac or Me?”*** But then the Lord rescues us in the trial, even if the only rescue He gives us is His death and resurrection so that we’re left with “Drop Dead Trust” in our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus, Who alone can save us! **Page 2**

Faith is drop dead trust that Jesus is our Savior – because of His forgiving death and victorious resurrection – even when all of the other evidence in our lives seems to be shouting God doesn't care. No-Matter-What FAITH lays itself empty-handed in the crucified and risen hands of Jesus. This is the kind of faith the Lord wants to work in each of us. He worked it in Job, Who, even after Job lost everything, confessed in Job 13, ***“Even if the Lord slays me; yet will I trust in Him!”*** And God worked faith in Abraham. Hebrews 11 says, ***“Abraham reasoned, that, if necessary, God could even raise the dead; and figuratively speaking, Abraham received Isaac back from death.***

At Mt. Moriah, the place of sacrifice, Abraham says, ***‘I and the boy will go over there. We will worship, and we will return.’*** NOTICE. This is HUGE. Abraham says, ***“We will return.”*** Abraham believes in the resurrection of the dead, even if it has to come to that. Abraham reasoned, ***‘Even if I have to kill my son, God will give Him back to me.’*** How can you know that? He promised. And He backed up His promise by rising again.

So, with nothing else to pin his hopes on, except the promises of God, the next morning Abraham woke Isaac up. You can imagine the excruciating pain inside of Abraham, a pain that can only be overcome with a faith that KNOWS God to be a loving Savior. They left the tent, gathered the firewood, and headed to Mt. Moriah: Loving Father. Obedient Son. What we are seeing is a picture of our Heavenly Father, walking His only Son, Jesus, to the cross. God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, on Mt. Moriah. What you may not know is that Calvary, where Jesus died, was located on Mt. Moriah.

What Abraham and Isaac are doing is a preview of coming attractions. Genesis 22, ***“Abraham placed the wood for sacrifice on Isaac’s back, and headed to Mt. Moriah.”*** John 19, ***“And carrying the wooden cross, Jesus went to the place of the skull.”*** Genesis 22, ***“Abraham took his son, his only Son, and laid him on top of the wood to sacrifice him.”*** John 3:16, ***“God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son,*** and, Acts 2:23, ***“They put Him to death, nailing Him to (a wooden) cross.”*** At the foot of the mountain, Isaac asked his daddy, ***“Father, the fire and the wood are here, but where’s the lamb?”*** Abraham said, ***“God will provide the Lamb.”*** Jesus asked His daddy in Gethsemane ***“Father, if it be Thy will take this cup from Me; yet not my will but Thine be done.”*** ***“Father, where’s the Lamb?”*** And God said, ***“You’re the Lamb.”*** John 1:29, ***“Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world.”*** Isaiah 53, ***“He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.”*** Page 3

Luther wrote, ***“Abraham must have cried out: ‘God, You can’t do this!’ You promised you would save the world through my seed, Isaac. You can’t go against Your Word. And so I believe, that even if you have to take my son, somehow, you will keep your promise to save the world thru my seed, even if You have to raise him from the dead.”***

One day, Katie Luther came to Martin Luther, very upset. She had just read Genesis 22, and couldn’t understand why God would ask Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Luther answered, ***“My dear, Katie, if you consider it unforgiveable that God would ask Abraham to sacrifice His son; then it is equally unforgiveable that you should expect God to sacrifice His only Son Jesus, for you. What God was actually doing was showing Abraham, and each of us, how He was going to sacrifice His only Son, Jesus, for us.”***

Now the decisive moment. Abraham bound his son to the altar of sacrifice. Psalm 22 says of Jesus, ***“They nailed His hands and feet.”*** Genesis 22 says, ***“(Isaac) spoke no word.”*** Isaiah 53 says of Jesus, ***“As a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He (Jesus) did not open His mouth.”***

As Abraham lifts his knife for the fatal plunge, the angel of the Lord intervened, saying, ***“Abraham! Abraham! Do NOT lay a hand on the child.”*** But do you know Who the angel of the Lord is, in the Old Testament, who stopped Abraham? It was Jesus Christ, before He took on flesh and blood. The One Who stops Abraham from sacrificing his only Son, Isaac, is the only-begotten Son of God, Who will be sacrificed for us.

The angel of the Lord, Jesus, then pointed Abraham to a ram, a male lamb, caught in a thicket of thorns. Matthew 27, ***“They twisted together a crown of thorns, and pressed it on Jesus’ head.”*** So Abraham took that male lamb, and sacrificed IT as a substitute for Isaac’s life. 1st Peter 1, ***“You were redeemed.....with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”*** In the end the angel of the Lord, Jesus Himself, stopped the knife from plunging into Isaac. But on Good Friday, God told all the angels to ‘stand down’. The order to rescue Jesus never came. Jesus said Himself, ***“Do you not know that I could call upon My Father in heaven, and He would at once send more than 72,000 angels, to deliver Me; but how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say I must die?”*** On Good Friday, the knife fell, so that you and I could live!

Why repent of our sins? Why turn away from those sins we love so much? Not only so that Jesus' death will not have been in vain, but so that you and I may receive the benefit of His saving death. You see, Jesus got nailed for our sins, so we don't have to keep nailing ourselves. But even more, when Jesus got crucified, it was really the devil who got nailed. Revelation 12 declares, "***We overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb.***"

Let me ask you this: *'If the things you and I think are so important in life were removed: your sports, money, health, power, pleasures, treasures, maybe even a loved one, would Jesus still be your Savior?'* ABSOLUTELY! But sometimes He has to take some of those things away – at least for a while - to get us to see that Jesus is the only Savior we have; and the life He gives is the only life worth living: Jesus' life is your righteousness. His death is your forgiveness. His resurrection is your life. His heaven is your home. And, in the end, nothing else matters but that God gave His Only Son to save you.

So why did God put Abraham through such an excruciating test? He did it to show us, in the starkest of terms, what God gave up for us. They say the worst pain a person can ever experience is the loss of a child. Even then, God knows your pain, and has come to save you from it. God knows what it's like to lose a child. Can you imagine the pain the Father was going through on that Good Friday for you and me? His heart must have been convulsing in pain, as He laid His Son, His Only Son, Whom He loved – Jesus - on the wood of the cross for us. And God damned His Only Son with our damnation. And God's "No-Matter-What Love", is what gives us a "No-Matter-What Faith".

So why the drama? God was impressing on Abraham, Isaac, and each of us, *"Don't ever forget what I gave up for you. I never intended to hurt Isaac, but I had to impress upon Abraham, and everyone, in no uncertain terms, what I had to give up to save you, My Son, My only Son, Whom I love. But I gave Him up, so you would know my love for you. It ripped my heart to shreds to nail my Son to the cross; but it was the only way to save you! Yes, I gave that test to Abraham, so that when I nailed My only Son, to the cross; the whole world would know how much I love you. NO MATTER WHAT you may face in this life. NO MATTER WHAT you may suffer in this life, I didn't spare my Son, but gave Him up to save you, NO MATTER WHAT!"*

What Abraham was asked to do, God's done! He's offered up His only Son.

Amen.