

March 2, 2021

Lectionary Passages:

Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45

Genesis 22:1-19

Hebrews 11:1-3, 13-19

Selected Verses:

He is the Lord our God;  
his judgments are in all the earth.  
He is mindful of his covenant forever,  
of the word that he commanded,  
for a thousand generations,  
the covenant that he made with Abraham,  
his sworn promise to Isaac,  
which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,  
to Israel as an everlasting covenant. – Psalm 105: 7-10



And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place “The Lord will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.” – Genesis 22: 13-14

By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom he had been told, “It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you.” He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead—and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. – Hebrews 11: 17-19

Devotional:

When I was about ten years old, I received one of my first visible scars. My brother was learning to drive, and was driving the family to visit friends who lived on the Puget Sound. The road went over earthen dams instead of going around the finger inlets. Our friends lived on one of these inlets. While driving, my brother looked over to see their house and didn't notice the slight bend in the road. The car went off the road, nose down a fifteen-foot embankment. In a moment, I flew from the back of the station wagon over my mother's right shoulder and hit the windshield. The scar above my right eye is from the door lock as I flew past. Instead of visiting family friends, I went in the back of a police car to the hospital to get stitches. While a minor tragedy of life, fortunately the tide was out. If the tide had been in, the car would have plunged into the water, and we all might have died. Each day, I notice the scar above my eye and realize each day is an extra gift from God to live and follow him.

It is with that blessing of extra life that I read the binding of Isaac. After 10 years of following God, and at the age of a hundred, Abraham finally had a son that would fulfill the promise made by God. God had promised that Abraham's descendants, through Isaac, would

number the stars. Now God was calling for Abraham to sacrifice this son. When God called Abraham, he replied, "Here I am." When Abraham called Isaac, he replied, "Here I am." This becomes a pattern throughout scripture. Followers of God humbly reply, "Here I am" and allow God to give directions.

The request of God is something that most people would find horrifying. God called Abraham to take his only son and offer him up as a burnt offering. Later, we learn that God condemns child sacrifices (Lev. 18:21 and Deut. 12:31), here Abraham was called to give up his child, give up his hopes and his dreams. To trust that God would fulfill his promise, that through Isaac God would make a great nation. Abraham followed God's instructions. He did not tell his wife. He did not tell the servants going with him to the mountain. He did not even tell his son, his only son. In faith, Abraham trusted that if God could give him a child at 100 years old, God could fulfill His covenant through Isaac.

The writer of the book of Hebrews interprets this faith to belief that God can raise someone from the dead. And figuratively speaking, Isaac was brought back to life. At the moment Abraham was to take Isaac's life, God stopped him, and told him to look in the bush and offer the ram caught there as a sacrifice. If you look closely in the painting by Rembrandt, you can see the ram caught in the bush just behind Isaac. The ram was sacrificed as a replacement, as a representative of Isaac. Until the time of Jesus, animal sacrifices were offered as a replacement for individuals, as an offering to God. In return, our lives are lived redeemed by God.

This sacrifice is a foreshadowing of the sacrifice God gave when he offered His only Son for the sins of the world. As a final sacrifice, God offered up his Son, his pride and joy, that we can have life and life eternal. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are given new life. With the scars, we are given a new day to live as a child of God. While each of us may have near death stories, Jesus faced death that we can have today to live as His disciples.

Prayer:

Almighty God, you gave the ultimate sacrifice through your son our Lord, Jesus Christ. May we live today in gratitude of the life you have given us. Help us to trust you when you call and reply. "Here I am." May we take up our cross and follow you in faith. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.