

Extreme Faith

Continuing to look at Abram / Abraham's journey

- Been Talking about Abraham's decision points / forks in the road
 - Genesis 22 - biggest **fork in the road** of his entire life...unfathomable request by God - for Abraham to sacrifice his son - and unfathomable faith demonstrated by Abraham in carrying out

Tension:

- Human condition:
 - This Scripture is super difficult...unfathomable that God would ask that
 - Unfathomable that Abraham would be obedient to that
 - we don't hear Abraham object or argue...we see immediate obedience
 - Challenging to believe we could have or will ever have faith like Abraham...or that we could do what Abraham did...or that God would require that!
 - Did we mention this Scripture is super difficult...?

Genesis 22:1-14 New International Version (NIV)

22 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

- Test not tempt
 - James 1:13 (NIV)
13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;
 - Deuteronomy 8:2 (NIV)
2 Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.
 - Nobody likes testing...may even struggle with the fact that God tests us...it does, however, reveal what is in you...
 - As teachers don't test to be mean, although we may think that when younger, really testing us to see what we know!
- Abraham was ready
 - "Here I am"

2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

- "Whom you love"= Huge
 - Family, only son, the son through whom all the promises were to be fulfilled...this is BIG

3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. (Probably Left early so that Sarah didn't get a chance to ask him where he was going and what he was doing! :p) He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

Pause to Process:

- So let's get this straight...God tells Abraham to sacrifice his Son - an unfathomable appeal...
- AND by ABRAHAM's actions, it would appear that Abraham is going to do it...that is extreme faith...
- Why on God's green earth would Abraham do that??!
- Some things to consider:
 - While this event comes like 20 pages into the Bible, and just like 10 pages after Abraham is called, it has been over 50 years since God first appeared to Abraham
 - That equates to 50 years of relationship; 50 years of God coming through; 50 years of trust; 50 years of friendship. When the call to sacrifice Isaac comes, Abraham and God are not acquaintances, they have 50 years of friendship built up - God has come through for Abraham and kept His promises over and over again - through their time in Egypt, through battles, through destruction of Sodom, and Isaac, who was promised, is ACTUALLY BORN even though Abraham was super old and Sarai's womb is dead...
 - **Hebrews 11:17-19 Message**
 - 17-19 By faith, Abraham, at the time of testing, offered Isaac back to God. Acting in faith, he was as ready to return the promised son, his only son, as he had been to receive him—and this after he had already been told, "Your descendants shall come from Isaac." Abraham figured that if God wanted to, he could raise the dead.
 - After 50 years, Abraham has knowledge of what God can do; Abraham believed God could resurrect Isaac from the dead should his death come to pass, even at his hand...Abraham has unfathomable faith
 - O that we would have THAT KIND of faith after 50 years of friendship and relationship with God...
- So while it's still a tough pill to swallow, we can sorta kinda somewhat possibly begin to comprehend how Abraham could obey even in this scenario

- That all doesn't, however, help us begin to understand Why on His green earth did God ask Abraham do that in the first place??!
- Losing a child is every parent's worst nightmare...
- Losing your child in this way seem like unbearable psychological torture...and we declare as Wesleyans that above everything God is a God of love?
- Let's hold that tension and keep reading...

4 On the third day (Third Day?= Sound familiar; like the sound of that!) Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then **we** will come back to you."

6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" [If Abraham's guts weren't already twisted, imagine fielding this question as your making your way up the hill!]

8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Here we get a glimpse a reason as to why God may have tested Abraham in this way:

- To prove that he 'feared' God; the result of the test is the proof of what was inside of Abraham: obedience, faith, fear and reverence of God...
- But that can't be the full picture...because God searches the heart of men and is able to discern what is in their hearts...WITHOUT them having to be tested as to whether or not they would carry out this unthinkable act...to sacrifice their own kid or not...
- So was the test in part to help Abraham truly to know or recognize or realize what was in him? Was Abraham strengthened even more in his faith and in his resolve to do immediately and exactly what the Lord required?
- Regardless, the whole thing still seems sadistic...

Table Conference November 2018:

- Heard a bunch of messages - BEST one we heard wasn't from a pastor, it was from a film maker named Darren Wilson - if you've ever seen or heard about the 'Fingers of God' movies, Darren Wilson is the director/producer of those films
- Darren talked about this Scripture as THE #1 Scripture that kept him at arm's length from God
 - One day the Lord said to Darren and said, "What is your problem?"
 - Darren ran through the list...
 - How is this love?
 - It's seems wrong
 - It's torture; worst nightmare; it's sadistic
 - If I love you, are you going to take the things and people away that I love the most?
 - The Lord replied, "It nothing more than I asked from myself...and I went through with it."
 - "You think it's bad that Abraham went 3 days walking his boy up the mountain? I spent 30 years walking my boy to the Cross"
 - "That wasn't sadistic; it's how I got you back..."
 - "I did it for you, kiddo...can you get over it now?"
 - God did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us...

13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. (Hebrew= Jehovah Jireh, say that!!!) And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." 15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies,

- Blessing= result of obedience
- Jesus calls us to forsake all to follow himeven family...maybe Genesis 22 was also a foreshadow of what would be required of us, of those who would follow God's Son
 - Luke 14:25-27 (NIV)

25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. 27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

18 and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice." 19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham lived at Beer-sheba.

- Obedience

- Blessing comes from obedience
- Not that all things will be great but you will be blessed!
- Voice of God, the way he talks to us Voice= Word (Scripture and Prophetic) and when we listen-obedience
 - Friends recognize each other's voice- phone call
 - **John 10:3-5,14-15** 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." 14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Closing

- We may not always understand why something is being required of us or why God is calling us to act in a particular way, but we have to trust God.
- God IS love.
 - God does test us, but it is to help us!
- If there is something happening or something that has happened in your life that is leading you to keep God at arms-length, we want to encourage you to look at it from a new perspective...kind of like how we've done with this story...
- Take a look at your relationship with God - are you friends, or acquaintances? What do you need to sow into that PRIMARY relationship so that you can move from acquaintance to relationship? - Time? Trust?
- Re-Consider the costs of following Jesus...the one who bought us all through His death requires we give Him all in return...