

Behold a Lamb – Genesis 22:1-19

Introduction:

A boy and his mother had gone to the corner drug store to buy a few items. And there on the counter was a candy jar. The little boy stood mesmerized looking up the jar filled with all that candy, and the owner smiled as he watched. He gently said to the boy “Do you want some of this candy?” The boy nodded, and the manager said, “Well go ahead and stick your hand in the jar and take a handful.” But the boy just stood there and didn’t move. Again the owner said, “Go ahead. It’s OK. Just reach in and get a handful of candy.” But the boy still continued to just stand there and stare at the jar. Finally, the owner reached in the jar and pulled out some of the candy and gave it to the boy who filled his pockets. When they got outside the mother asked him, “Why didn’t you take that handful of candy when the man told you it was O.K.?” The boy smiled and said, “Because his hands are bigger than mine”.

That’s one smart kid! He knew if he put his hand in the jar he wouldn’t get nearly as much candy as when the owner did it for him. So he waited for the owner to PROVIDE for him! Because, if the owner provided for him, he’d get more than he would have gotten by himself.

In our text today, we find that Abraham learned that very lesson. In answer to his son’s question about where the sacrifice was, Abraham said, "God will PROVIDE for himself the lamb for a burnt offering." (Genesis 22:8) And when God provides, we always receive so much more than when we try and find our own solutions. Here on Mount Moriah God reveals Himself as Jehovah Jireh – the God who provides.

Let’s walk through this story to see how we get to that conclusion and what it means for us today.

The test

We have been following Abraham’s journey of faith, and sometimes he has done well, sometimes he has failed miserably. But as Pastor John so ably pointed out to us last week, faith grows each time we face a test and come through a situation seeing God’s provision.

For instance, I have learned that I can ask God to help in any situation because time and time again God has answered my prayers for help. Just yesterday a cell phone was lost at the beach. As soon as we realized it was missing, we prayed and headed back to the beach to look for the missing phone. A search through the park and parking lot led us to discover the phone, sitting on the ground in the parking lot. Anyone could have seen it, and taken it home. A car could have run over it and destroyed it. I could have walked by and not seen it... but our God cares even about little things like a missing phone, and he took me right to the missing phone, and I found it unharmed and safe. Jehovah Jireh – God provides!

Our passage outlines Abraham’s greatest test. After waiting 100 years for a son, and holding onto a promise that God would provide a son for over twenty-five years, Abraham is asked to give up his son!

“Abraham!” God says.

“Here I am,” he replied.

² Then God said, “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 tell you about.” ¹

Can you imagine God asking you to give up your child? Worse, to sacrifice your child, which means killing that child? I cannot imagine the pain that decision would cause.

God knows how hard this is – hear his words to Abraham: “your son, your ONLY son, whom you love....” This was not an easy request.

Please note: God DOES NOT require human sacrifice. In fact when he gave the law to Moses a few generations later he strictly forbid human sacrifice. This was a one time **test** for Abraham.

The next morning Abraham was on his way to do what God asked him to do. Abraham had learned that he must trust God and obey him in all things. He certainly did not understand this request, a call to kill the very son who was said to be the son of promise, God’s answer to the promise that Abraham would be the father of a great nation. But by faith he headed out to the mountain to do as God asked him to...

Can you imagine Abraham explaining this to Sarah? I doubt Abraham got any sleep as he explained to Sarah again and again how he really did hear God and he really did have to do this...

Faith, as Pastor John pointed out last week, requires action, a commitment to do something. Abraham gets together a traveling party complete with a load of wood to burn the sacrifice and heads for the mountain. Part way he leaves the servants behind and says these words, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.” (v. 5)

“We will come back.” Abraham knows what God is requiring of him, and yet he believes somehow God will allow his son to live. The writer to the Hebrews says in 11:19 that Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead so he would believe his son would be given back to him after the sacrifice was completed. Now that is a lot of faith.

We are not sure exactly how old Isaac is, but it is likely he is at least a teenager. He is big enough to carry the wood for the sacrifice and smart enough to see something is not quite right. He says to his father, “We have the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?”

Abraham gives a great answer: “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering.”

Together father and son climb the mount and build an altar for the Lord. Then Isaac allows his 120 year old dad to tie him up and lay him on the altar. As one writer described this scene, “Abraham lovingly put one hand over Isaac’s eyes to spare him seeing the knife he raised in his

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New International Version*](#). (1984). (Ge 22:1–2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

other hand.” I can imagine tears streaming down Abraham’s face as he prepared to take the life of his son, his only son, whom he loved...

Then God spoke. “Abraham. Abraham.”

It is so good that Abraham, despite the pain of this trial, despite the grief of contemplating losing his son, despite the confusion as to why God would allow this, Abraham was still listening to God. How many people stop listening to God when things do not go the way they think they should, when they are going through the deep waters, when God is allowing the tough times to come as a test of their faith?

“Do not lay a hand on the boy. Do not do anything to him. I know you fear God because you have not withheld from me your son, your precious son.” (v. 12)

Then Abraham saw the ram in the thicket, caught there by its horns, and that ram becomes the sacrifice to God. No doubt a father and son were very grateful that day for the ram God provided. That day they learn another name for God: Jehovah Jireh- the God who provides.

And the story ends with God renewing his promises to Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, and that blessings would flow to all nations through his offspring.

Scripture does not tell us when Abraham got a glimpse of when and how this blessing would come, but according to Jesus, he did. In John 8:26 we read:

⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” ²

In Genesis 22 we read that the angel of the Lord came to Abraham and stopped him from slaying Isaac. Often in the Old Testament we hear of the angel of the Lord and we can see it might have been a visit of the preincarnate Christ – it could be Jesus. For instance, when we read about the fourth person in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego we cannot help but think of Jesus. Could it be that Abraham received a visit from God through Jesus there on the mountain? It is clear Jesus talked with Abraham and walked with him, and showed him what was to come...

The Provision

What did Abraham see? He saw the fulfilment of this verse:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

As Jeff Strite points out in his sermon on this passage, “Genesis 22 ... shows that God had been planning the giving of HIS only begotten son centuries before Christ came. Isaac was the mirror

² [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Jn 8:56). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

image of Jesus. Both were offered as sacrifices by their fathers on Mount Moriah... and each was described as the only begotten son of that father.

And as the story unfolds, we find that these “only begotten” sons had much in common: Isaac had a 3-day hike to Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22:4); Jesus had 3 days from the cross to the grave to the resurrection.

Isaac was accompanied by two servants (Genesis 22:3); Jesus by two thieves (Matthew 27:38)

Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice (Genesis 22:6); Jesus carried the wood of his cross (John 19:17)

Isaac willingly laid down on the altar (Genesis 22:9); Jesus willingly was laid on the cross (Luke 22:42).³

But if Jesus showed Abraham the full story, he would see that this time the Father would not say “Stop.” This time the son would be killed. This time the sacrifice would be made and the lamb that God had provided would not be a ram in the bush, but would be the son, his only son, who he loved very much...

Why?

1 John 2:2 explains it this way: “He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.”

Jesus would be sacrificed on that cross to take the punishment our sins deserved, to provide a way for forgiveness that could be achieved no other way. Jesus died so we could live. He was the Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world!

When our efforts to be good enough to enter heaven fail – and they always will – God provides. If we can learn to trust God’s provision – even as Abraham of old did – then we can find we have forgiveness of sin, fellowship with God and life eternal through faith in Jesus Christ.

It all starts with a simple prayer: Lord, have mercy on me, for I am a sinner. I know I cannot change that – but you can. You have provided for my salvation through Jesus, and today I repent of my sin and put my faith in Jesus. He alone can save me. Thank you for the blessing of salvation I find in your son who you gave for my salvation. Thank you Heavenly Father. Fill me with your Spirit that I may walk in obedience to you and people will see Jesus in me. Amen.

Jehovah Jireh. God has provided. Now it is up to you: will you believe? Will you accept by faith the gift? If you have, celebrate with us. If not, why not accept the gift of Jesus today?

³ <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/why-does-god-provide-jeff-strite-sermon-on-witness-243005?page=3&wc=800>