

New Testament: John 19:16-22
Sermon Text: Genesis 22:1-14

Please join me in prayer. And now Lord God may the words of my mouth, and the meditations, of all our hearts be pleasing and acceptable in Thy sight our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

The first Sunday of this month, three weeks ago, we talked about the amazing amount of trust and faith, on the part of both God and man, that it took for Abram to pick up everything he had and move it all westward without a clear understanding of exactly where he was going. He trusted that God would indeed show him where he was to go and he did so because, as an ancestor of Noah, he knew who God was. He knew about the covenant between God and Noah and all of creation. Abram knew, before God told him to trust and go, that God was trustworthy and faithful. Abram trusted and went because he knew God's character. We too can trust and go because we know God's character. God deeply loves and cares for us. God will not abandon us nor forsake us. This is who God is. This is who God has continually revealed himself to be. That's why we can trust and go should we be called to. We can move our entire family to a new state. We can have an uncomfortable conversation. We can do so knowing that God will take care of us because the proof of God's care is all right here.

Today's text is another trust and go moment; and not just for Abraham but for Isaac too. Let's review. This time God has a specific land picked out, Moriah, but it is the mountain top that will be shown and revealed once they get there. Even after all these years of scholarship and study, we still don't know overly much about this land of Moriah. Perhaps it is the land of the Amorites. Perhaps they engaged in the cultic practice of child sacrifice and so God's resolution, the ram in the thicket, not only saves and redeems Isaac but abolishes the practice of cultic child sacrifice wherever it may be found. Perhaps, we just don't know. Regardless, we move on in the narrative to see that it has now been three days since their arrival in the land of Moriah. Three days? And let the foreshadowing begin. On the third day since their arrival, Abraham loads his son Isaac up with the wood that is going to be used for his own sacrifice. Roman execution crosses were made of wood. In our reading from John we reminded ourselves that Jesus was forced to carry his own method of execution up to Golgotha. As they are walking towards the mountaintop Isaac realizes that something is missing. In his innocence he asks, "where is the lamb?" Jesus comes to be known as the lamb who was slain. Jesus was innocent of the crimes that he was accused of. He kept silent and did not protest his innocence but Jesus was innocent nonetheless. In response to Isaac's query, Abraham confirms that God will provide for himself a lamb for a burnt offering.

Here's an interesting theological quandary. Does God *need* an atoning sacrifice? Or does God permit an atoning sacrifice to help us, as sinners, to navigate our guilt? Abraham says that God will provide for himself. Does God *need* that sacrifice? Or is it yet another incident of foreshadowing in which we can look ahead to see that all the little sacrifices will not atone for creation's guilt and God must provide the sacrifice of reconciliation for Himself? God *wants* reconciliation; we know that for a fact. Our theology tells us that for reconciliation to be fully successful, an atoning sacrifice, fully God, and fully man, is needed. Sounds like more foreshadowing to me. God provides for himself a lamb, that is Jesus, for an offering. As Abraham and Isaac will find a ram in the thicket, not a lamb, this sounds like more foreshadowing to me.

Now comes the crazy part that I can't explain besides saying that Isaac too trusted and went. Old man Abraham *couldn't* carry the wood. That's why Isaac did it. A young, healthy Isaac could have easily overpowered his frail, old father. Thus, it had to be that he submitted to being bound and that he further submitted to being laid on the altar that he watched his father construct. Isaac trusted and went as well. Likely because he, as his father, had been steeped in the stories of God who flooded the world but saved their descendant Noah and his family and made a covenant with Noah to never harm the world like that again. Isaac would have heard the stories of Abram's call to go to a foreign land not yet known. He would have heard the promises and covenant that God had now made with Abraham. He too would have been steeped in the stories of a loving, compassionate God who could be trusted. Isaac too would have known, like we discussed last week, that God keeps His promises. So, if God was to keep His promise through Isaac, because he knew he was the natural born child of promise to Abraham and Sarah, God *couldn't* allow Isaac to be harmed in any way! It seems to me that these are all the things Isaac knew and they enabled him to trust and go just like his father did all those many years ago. But again, neither Abraham nor Isaac trusted and went because of their own blind, powerful faith, but because they trusted in God's faithfulness to *them*. More foreshadowing.

Starting next Sunday we will again remember the steps that Jesus took as he trusted and went on his journey to the cross because of his trust in God's faithfulness to him. Where will you go because of your trust in God's faithfulness? Where will we go? Wherever it is, know and trust that God is already there and waiting for us because God is faithful to us, first. Amen.