

## July 17<sup>th</sup> Genesis 22:1-19 and Hebrews 11:17-19

One of the most dramatic stories in the Bible

In this series of sermons on Abraham, we met him at his lowest – he lied to the pharaoh about his wife Sarah being his sister. Today we meet him as an incredibly faithful servant of God.

Finally, after all those years of waiting: a son, Isaac! (Gen. 21) Through all sorts of deviations (Hagar, Ishmael) finally God's promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah is fulfilled! Gen. 12: 'I will make you into a great nation...' starts with Isaac. The whole future is dependent on this son.

But now: verse 3 – your only son – whom you love – Isaac. Every part hurts...Sacrifice him as a burnt offering.

Verse 3 just says that Abraham makes preparations to go and do this. Has he slept that night? No, I guess not. There must have been an enormous battle going on in his heart and mind. How can God ask this of him? Did he do anything wrong, that God wants a burnt offering? Does God shut the door to the future by Abraham taking away his heir? Yet, he goes. Obedience – amazing; frightening as well – what will happen?

On the third day – imagine, making that journey with your son, who you will soon lose...

When they come to the place, Abraham leaves the servants behind and continues with only Isaac, the wood (Isaac carries his own...), the fire, the knife.

But look, what does Abraham say to the servants at that point? The boy and I go there, we will worship and we will come back to you. Plural: we, not I. Did A. want to hide from the servants what is going to happen? Did he not tell the truth/does he tell a white lie? I don't think so, because Abraham learned his lesson in telling a white lie... The author of the letter to the Hebrews interprets as follows: read Hebrews 11:17-19 'God could even raise the dead...' 'We will return', Abraham said. I believe there is something prophetic here and in any case a deep trust in God, that he may do the impossible. But: this doesn't make it easier for Abraham (like: 'It's not serious, I will get Isaac back anyway).

There is a repeated 'my son', 'your son, you only one' – they both went together (verse 6, 8). A close relationship – all the more intense for Abraham in the prospect of losing his son.

- (verse 7) Where is the lamb for the burnt offering? God will provide a lamb...
- Verse 9: Isaac willingly accepts that he is the burnt offering...
- Verse 10: you hold your breath...
- Verse 11: Abraham, Abraham. 'Here I am' – verse 1.
- Verse 12: 'because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.'
- Verse 13: a ram (cf. verse 8 – God did provide the animal for the offering...)
- Verses 15-17: 'your son, your only son'. Promises of blessing and many descendants is repeated.

Hundreds of years later: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son...' (John 3:16). When Jesus is baptized: 'You are my Son, whom I love...' (Mark 1:11) Paul (Romans 8:32): God 'who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?'

God did what Abraham was asked to do, but in the end didn't have to. God gave his only, beloved, Son – to die for us. He did not spare his Son. Jesus was the lamb, slaughtered to atone for all our sins. And like Isaac, this Son was willing to be that sacrifice.

The story of today in Genesis 22 foreshadows what is going to happen in Jesus Christ. God did what Abraham, in the end, did not have to do: giving his own Son to die for us. So much God loved the world – and you and me!

Today's story gives us an insight into, or rather a glimpse of what it must have meant for our Father in heaven to give up his own, beloved Son.

At the same time, blessing and many descendants are promised to Abraham. The story does not end with Isaac's death!! And today, we are here, spiritual descendants of Abraham. Fellow-believers of this Old Testament example of faith.

Do we trust God, as Abraham did? Do we give ourselves to God, who gave up his Son for us? Is he more worth than anything else in our lives?