

Genesis 22:1-14  
“God’s Plan for Abraham”  
Pentecost 3 (Proper 8)

June 26, 2022  
First Ev. Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.  
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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Today, we begin the second week of our ten-week exploration of God’s Word. Each week we will look at a real, historical event in the Bible and how it teaches us about God’s Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, the beginning, center, and end of human history.

Last week, we saw the first humans, Adam and Eve, ruin God’s perfect creation by eating the fruit He had forbidden them to eat. That rebellious act set devastating effects in motion throughout creation. Disease, famine, pestilence, and extinction were unleashed throughout the planet. And hatred, mistrust, war, crime, and death came upon Adam and Eve and their descendants—*our whole human race*.

We are all impacted by the Fall into sin. We experience it in our lives, the things we do to one another, the hurtful things done to us. We see it on the news and in social media, especially these last couple days with the overturning of Roe v. Wade. As Satan deceived our first parents, he continues to deceive so many into believing that abortion is pleasing. Sin separates us from God and from each other. But with every sin, there is forgiveness through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. You see, sin is at the core of the distrust and unrest that fills our nation and world and is the cause of every problem that plagues us.

But God did not abandon His creation. He promised that one of Adam and Eve’s descendants, His own Son, would crush Satan’s head—freeing humanity and all creation from the curse of sin and death.

Adam and Eve were separated from God and each other by their sin. By nature, they and all of us—*their children*—are hostile to God and to one another. Only God could bridge that separation by His promise of the coming Savior. All those who believed God’s promise could know peace with God and with their neighbors. But those who rejected God’s promise could not.

That difference quickly demonstrated itself when Adam and Eve’s firstborn son, Cain, offered an unacceptable sacrifice to God. It was unacceptable because he offered it out of obligation rather than true repentance and grateful faith. In contrast, his brother Abel offered a sacrifice in sincere faith and trust.

Cain was angry that God rejected his sacrifice but accepted Abel's. Though God warned him not to let his anger master him, and promised to accept him if he was repentant, Cain murdered his brother Abel. When God offered him protection and forgiveness, Cain spurned God's grace, turned his back, and went to live his life without God. Sadly, most of Adam and Eve's descendants followed in his footsteps.

God kept His promise alive through Abel's younger brother Seth who believed and taught God's promise to his descendants. But over time, as new generations came, more and more of Seth's offspring began to follow Cain, and the number of true believers dwindled. In time, only one family was left, headed by Noah, a believer from the line of Seth.

God was deeply grieved by the violence and hard hearts of Adam and Eve's unbelieving descendants. They abused one another and the creatures He had entrusted to them. God determined to send a world-wide flood to wipe mankind off the face of His earth. But He had compassion on Noah and his family. He warned him of the coming flood and instructed him to build a large ark in which his family would be preserved, along with representatives of all the animals that would otherwise be destroyed by the flood.

Noah obeyed God and built that ark, gathering the food and supplies and receiving the animals into the ark which God brought to him. The world faced an early Judgment Day that day. It is a preview of the Judgment Day God will bring on this world on the Last Day. God faithfully protected Noah and his family and all the creatures in the ark, and He will faithfully protect you and all those who cling to Jesus in faith on that Last Day.

After the flood, God blessed Noah's descendants and sent them to multiply and refill the earth. But among those descendants of Noah, a similar pattern established itself as we saw with Adam and Eve's descendants. More and more rejected God and forgot His gracious promise of a Savior. Once again, the number of believing descendants was diminishing. Since God had promised Noah that He would never destroy His creation through a worldwide flood again, He instead chose another man, Abram, and his wife Sarai. Abram lived roughly two thousand years before Christ lived on this earth. From this elderly couple, He would raise up a new nation. Their descendants would not only preserve God's original promise of a Savior from the Garden of Eden, but He would also give them new and wonderful revelations unfolding many details about the mission and work of that Savior.

Make no mistake. God was not abandoning all the nations to focus on this one. Instead, He was establishing this new nation to bless and save them all.

God called Abram to leave his fatherland and go to a place God would reveal. So, Abram travelled southwest to a land that joined the three continents—what we know today as Africa, Europe, and Asia. And there in the land possessed by the Canaanites, the Lord would do great things for Abram’s descendants, and many people of other nations would hear of these mighty works and come to His people to learn of His great salvation promise.

Abram and Sarai obeyed God and wandered through an unfamiliar land which their descendants would possess. They raised their herds and flocks and lived in tents. But they proclaimed God’s promise of salvation to the Canaanites who lived in the land. Because God blessed Abram with great wealth, the Canaanites considered him a great prince among them.

When they had first left home, Abram was 75 years old and Sarai 65 years old. She was childless and too old to bear children anymore. God changed Abram’s name to Abraham and Sarai’s name to Sarah. Finally, after waiting twenty-five more years, God sent the son He had promised them. They named him Isaac. Several years later, when Isaac was a youth, God gave Abraham a startling command:

***“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you”*** (Genesis 22:2).

Abraham must have been dumbfounded. Isaac was his beloved son—the son from whom God had promised to raise a nation—a son through whom the promised Savior would come. How could God command him to burn him as a sacrifice? But Abraham did the opposite of Eve. He did not question or disobey; he did not try to figure out God’s reasons for His command. In simple trust and obedience, he took Isaac and the wood and the knife for the sacrifice, and they set out together to the mountain to which God directed them.

When they arrived, Abraham tied up Isaac, laid him on the wood, and raised his knife to slay him. Suddenly Abraham heard a voice calling out,

***“Abraham, Abraham! . . . Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me”*** (Genesis 22:11–12).

Abraham looked up and saw a ram that was caught by its horns in a thorny thicket. Abraham took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering instead of his son. He named that mountain ***“The LORD will provide,”*** saying, ***“On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided”*** (Genesis 22:14).

It is easy to be astonished with Abraham's obedience and willingness to sacrifice Isaac. But we must not fail to see how God spared Isaac. He provided a ram to take Isaac's place. It was another important revelation about the Seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head. He would be a substitute who would be sacrificed in our place. He would suffer and die for our sins so we could live in God's presence eternally.

Even more pointedly, just as the ram was caught in the thickets because its horns were encircled by thorns, God's Son, His promised Savior, would have His head encircled by a crown of thorns as He was led to the cross to be sacrificed in our place.

Little by little as the Old Testament times passed, God revealed more and more about His plan to save His fallen human creatures through in Incarnation of His Son: the birth, life, death, and resurrection of His one and only Son and how His Son will restore His glorious creation when He returns on the Last Day.

But Isaac's sacrifice doesn't only show us something new about Jesus' great sacrifice on the cross. It speaks also of that Last Day when we will all stand before Jesus Christ for judgment. Abraham could have sacrificed the one thing he loved most in this world, his dear son, Isaac, but that sacrifice would not save him from the wrath of God for his sins on Judgment Day. God had to provide the sacrifice for Abraham too.

The same is true for you and me. No amount of obedience and good works or suffering and sacrifice will be enough to satisfy God's wrath at our sins. He must provide the sacrifice.

And that sacrifice could have been none other than God's own dear Son. God led Him here, near this same mountain, wrapped His head in thorns, and offered Him as a burnt sacrifice on the cross. Burnt not by fire, but by the pangs of hell and the blazing sun that made Him cry aloud, "*I thirst*" (John 19:28). The very Son of God – *the Second Person of the Trinity* – died that day, but He rose to life again on the third day.

God has provided the one and only sacrifice that could pay the penalty for each and every one of our sins. In Christ Jesus, you have complete pardon and peace. And when He comes again on the Last Day, He will restore your heart, soul, mind, and body, and gather all of us, His believers, to live in His glorious presence for all eternity in His perfectly restored heaven and earth. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠