

Untitled (32)

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[0:00] There we go, good, all right. I'd like for you for a moment, just to relax, sit back, lean back, lean back in your pew if you like.

Close your eyes. And see, even the snoring has already started. You see, you can tell. But sit back and close your eyes and think for a moment, would you?

I'd like for you to, in your mind's eye, picture that of which is the most valuable to you.

It can be a person. It can be an object. But just decide what is most valuable.

If it's a thing, look at the colors.

[1:32] Look at the shape. If it's a person, look into their eyes. Just for a moment.

On this planet, there is nothing or no one more valuable than what you are thinking of right now.

The more vivid your picture, the better. Now, we're not going to share this with anybody.

So this is just for you. This is that which is most valuable to you.

So for those of you who are still awake, if you want to wake up, go ahead. You know, in our Old Testament reading, we hear of this passage we call the near sacrifice of Isaac, of Abraham.

[2:51] And this is really, you'd say, the culmination of the Abrahamic section of the book of Genesis.

This is its zenith. The Abraham section of Genesis started back in chapter 11 and began where we read, we hear of God appearing in Ur of the Chaldees.

And a man named Terah, that's Abraham's father, taking Abraham, or Abram at the time, and Sarai, Lot, their nephew, and he traveled all the way to Hiram.

So if you're looking at a map, you were down in the lower eastern, southern east section. They traveled all the way up the Fertile Crescent, up toward the top there.

And they got there to Harah. And Terah died. And after that, the text says, this is Genesis chapter 12, things really pick up.

[4:00] God appears and told Abraham and said, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation.

And I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. Kind of an exciting future God had in store for Abraham, don't you think?

So they went down from Haran. They went down to Canaan. And there the Lord appeared to Abram at the time.

And he said, your offspring, I will give this lamb. So he built there an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. And that's a promise, don't you think?

I will give this lamb to you. The problem with this was, quite often, Abraham looked at things through his earthly eyes and kind of take control of the situation.

[5:08] The Abrahamic section of Genesis continued. There was a famine in the land. And so they went down to Egypt to sojourn there.

And when they get down there, what does Abram do? He looks at Sarah and says, hey, listen, you are one good looking lady. We're going to get there. We get down to Egypt.

They're going to look at you. They're going to say, let's kill this guy because we want her. And so that's kind of what happened. And then pretty soon God appeared to Pharaoh and said, no, this woman is not just his sister.

This is his wife. And they basically kicked him out of Egypt. They went back to where they were originally at in Canaan, the original spot.

And in the meantime, they were blessed. They were blessed. Abraham and Lot, all their possessions and their cattle and all their land. They just got too good for that area.

[6:15] So he looked at Lot and said, listen, we can't do this together like this. This land won't support both of us. So you decide. You go one way and I'll take the other.

Your decision, Lot. And so Lot looked and said, hey, this area looks good. And so Lot went off into the area. Now that we read later on will be Sodom and Gomorrah in that area.

And then we get to chapter 15. Chapter 15, again, God promised Abram and he said, behold, I have, and he looks up at him. And again, Abraham is looking with his own earthly eyes.

And he says, you've given me no offspring. And a member of my household will be my heir. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him in this chapter 15.

It says, this man will not be your heir. Your very own son will be your heir. And he brought him outside and he said, look toward the heavens and number the stars if you can.

[7:19] And if you're able to remember them. And he said to him, so shall your offspring be. Now again, first he said, look at all the land around you.

I'm going to give you that. And now here God is talking to a man who has no children. And they say, your descendants are going to number more than the stars.

Now that is a promise, don't you think? It really is. And so things continued, but Abraham became impatient.

And so what does he say? They say, hey, I've got to do something here. And so Sarah said, listen, here's Hagar, my Egyptian slave. You take her to be your wife and can have children through her.

And God looks down in an amazing, amazing words. And he said, no, no, Abraham, no.

[8:26] Is anything too hard for the Lord? And he said, no, it's not going to be through this child who was born through Hagar, Ishmael.

And ultimately he said, no, Sarah is going to have your child. Sarah will have your child and you will be blessed through your child.

Now, of course, if you're sitting there and you are 100 years old and, and, you know, and so wife, Sarah's there. She's 90 years old and she's getting old, too old to have children.

And really the humor in the text is really tough for us to pick up in English. Not just the idea as we think about it. We can say, yeah, that's pretty old. I mean, not only is he just old.

Let's just say Abraham needed a little blue pill. Okay. I mean, there's a lot of, a lot of humor in this text.

[9:31] And that's exactly what they did. Both of them, Abraham and Sarah laughed. And so what do they name the child who was conceived?

Laughter. Laughter. Isaac. And so now we have Isaac. And Isaac, according to the text, the promised child, the one through whom God has said, look up at the sky.

Your descendants will number more than the stars of the sky. Dear beloved, the beloved child.

That's Isaac. The beloved child. That's the way the Septuagint reads and describes the beloved child. This was the most valuable.

The most dearly held possession for Abraham and Sarah. Just as I asked you earlier, a few minutes ago, to think about that, which is most valuable to you.

[10:45] This was the most valuable to Abraham. And so we come to the beginning of chapter 22. You can imagine Abraham.

He's going along his work, his life. Everything is fine. Everything is great. He's holding his beloved child. He's having a wonderful time with Isaac. And then God comes down and says, 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 that I shall tell you.

Now, not the type of response or command that you really want to hear from God. This is God's request.

And so they're down there about, you know, Kadesh Barnea. They're there. They have to head up. It's about 45 miles or so to this mountain range. They go to Moriah. And really, any human being who reads this text and you think about this and you have to ask, you say, what?

Really? Really? God wants you to sacrifice this child? Can you imagine how Abraham felt?

[12:07] Can you imagine if you were in his place and the object or that which you just thought of at the beginning of this time and God said, sacrifice it.

How would you feel? How would you feel? Well, Abraham says, okay. He doesn't make any argument.

As he did in his previous points of his life. He just goes on. He goes on. He doesn't laugh. He just goes on.

And they go a couple days into the journey and Abraham looks at his young men and says, stay with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there and worship and then come back to you. Someone argued this is a statement of faith. We don't know. Did Abraham have an inkling that they were going to get to this spot and then God would change his mind?

[13:10] Is that what he was hoping? I don't know. Maybe Abraham was walking along thinking about how in the world am I going to describe this to Sarah. Not a good story.

Not a nice thing to think about. Right? Could you imagine walking with them as they're going up the mountain? You can hear the crunch of the earth beneath their sandals.

Maybe the sun is coming up. The heat of the day is getting a little bit more. You can hear the birds singing. Maybe a few squirrels or something scampering through the bushes.

You can look and you can see the shrubs. Smell the flowers. Probably wasn't too much of a conversation between them.

But they're walking up the mountain. Finally, Isaac looks up. Says, Father, where's the sacrifice? Where's the sacrifice?

[14:15] Where is the sacrifice? Abraham just looked to him and said, God will provide for himself the lamb for the offering. And moved on.

We do see a hint of faith here. And it's really a mystery. Throughout the ages, people have really talked about this. And there are a number of different theories about what Abraham might have been thinking about.

Or what he meant when he said, God will provide the sacrifice. Did he think that God would intervene? Did he hope that there was something up there at the top of the mountain?

I don't know. But we do know this. He got there. And as the text continues on. He bound Isaac. Put him on.

Took the wood off of Isaac. Put it down. Bound Isaac. Put Isaac on there. And then pulled out his knife.

[15:23] He raised the knife. You can imagine the sun glittering off of this knife. He held it up in the air.

He was going to do it. He was not going to stop. He had the knife above his most beloved son. And he was about to bring that knife down and descend.

And then, boom! Suddenly, the angel of the Lord came and said, 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. And Abraham looked up and saw a ram.

So he took the ram. He went over. Got it. Unbound Isaac. They worshiped. They offered the ram as a sacrifice on the mountain. And they both walked down the mountain.

[16:30] Both very much alive. Very much alive. Pretty emotional, don't you think? About 1,500 years, give or take a few centuries.

On that same mountain. On that same spot. Another son was carrying some wood.

Only this was not wood for a fire. It was a cross. The area was not.

Did not have the sound of birds. The area was filled with cries of anger. Yelling, crucify him!

Crucify him! And the son carrying the wood wasn't falling on dirt. It was falling on stones and cobblestones.

[17:43] Blood from his whipping was dripping down. Women around were crying. What had changed from the birds and squirrels to human beings in all their anger screaming, crucify him and crying.

The son was carrying the wood on which he would die. Along with them carried men not with knives but with nails.

the nails that they were prepared to use and they did. The nails that they used this time they bound the son to the same wood.

They placed the nails in his in the son to hold him there. the son rather than asking the question where is the sacrifice the son looked up and said father into your hands I commend my spirit.

a millennial before the angel of the Lord stopped the hand down this time there was no stopping the execution.

[19:34] The beloved one the beloved one in whom the father said I am well pleased died died for you and me rather than walking down the hill alive the beloved one was carried off of the cross dead and placed in a tomb now a millennial before after three days Abraham and Isaac walked back home and they could sit down and have dinner with Sarah not this time the beloved one laid dead in a tomb you see the story that we heard to the account in Genesis 22 is not a story about a God an arbitrary God trying to trick an old guy it's a story of faith it's a story of faith from of a man who learned to trust the one who promised that the one who promised would fulfill those promises that's what that story is about when you thought of something or someone who was valuable to you would you trust the one who promises would that piece of valuable property you could say or person you know

God's promises are yea and amen as the apostle Paul says and we are called to offer all that is valuable to us to God God's offering God's offering on that mountain provided life for us he took that which was most valuable to him and gave him for us because we are valuable to him as well if the person or if you were thinking was a person look in their eyes again look in the object are you willing to sacrifice or give that person or that object up to God the one who promises because today we know we can take our faith and place our faith in the one who promises because we know that after the beloved son died he rose again he rose from the grave and we live in him the death that he died he took upon himself all of the sins that we have committed that we could commit and will commit so that we can be his disciples we can cast all of those earthly cares on him because he loves us today we enter his presence to worship him with a lot of stuff a lot of stuff we're carrying I didn't see anybody walking with a pile of wood but we brought things with us that we need to give to God to sacrifice to give to him but he calls us to give to him just as on that day he called Abraham to sacrifice that which was valuable to him and let God do what God does best fulfill the promises he has made to his people on that day on that mountain Abraham was faithfully gave about Isaac God the father millennia later faithfully gave his son so that we might live what are we going to give what are we going to give

Lord Jesus Christ you stretched out your loving arms on the hard wood of the cross that all might come within the reach of your saving embrace so clothe us in your Holy Spirit that we reaching forth our hands in love may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you Jesus Christ our Lord Amen