

Easter IV

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[0 : 00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. One of the most intriguing stories in the Bible is found in the Old Testament, and it's recorded in Genesis chapter 22.

There we read how the Lord tells Abraham to take his son Isaac up to Mount Moriah and to offer him as a sacrifice.

Such a request seems cruel and very bizarre, especially because the Lord condemns any idea of human sacrifice throughout the Old Covenant.

What is even more bizarre is the fact that Isaac was the promised son that God would use to fulfill his covenant with Abraham in creating a great nation that would come from all the peoples of the earth.

Now that story only makes sense when we read its proper interpretation from the book of Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 11 verse 19, which states that Abraham had faith that if he did sacrifice his beloved son, God would raise up Isaac from the dead.

[1 : 24] In other words, Abraham had faith that God would vindicate him and be true to his promise. Now you might be saying to yourself, what does this have to do with our gospel reading this morning?

Well, it has everything to do with our gospel text. What we heard here in John chapter 16 is part of the farewell discourses from Jesus to his disciples.

In other words, Jesus informs his devout followers who had given up everything to follow him that he would now be leaving them, that he would be departing.

And our text says they were sorrowful and a bit confused. But our Lord assures them that this is necessary because the paraclete, the comforter, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity would now come and he would lead them into all truth.

The role of the Holy Spirit would be to take the words and deeds of Jesus and he would perpetually reveal those words and those deeds to all who follow our Lord.

[2 : 45] The role of the Holy Ghost, or sometimes called the Holy Spirit, is to make Christ known to us, to make Christ present among us.

And the Holy Spirit does this. He does this by using the everyday and ordinary physical things of creation in order to lead us into all truth.

The Spirit uses water, bread, and wine. And he uses the scriptures to lead and to guide his church. Like Abraham and like the disciples who first heard of our Lord's departure, we often feel all alone and a bit confused.

We often wonder, what in the world is God doing? Especially as we look around and see what's happening in our world. We often feel as though we are left to ourselves and that God is silent at best and sometimes feel as though he has abandoned us, that he no longer hears us.

And I'm not going to stand up here and lie to you and say that I don't have those same thoughts from time to time. Like the disciples, sorrow fills our hearts in times of great loneliness, in times of great disappointment.

[4 : 13] We are people that often feel the anguish and the hurt of everyday life. We are people where our bodies betray us, where we feel as though, where is God in the time of my hurt and pain?

But what our Lord is calling us to do is the same thing that Abraham did and the same thing the disciples were called to act on, and that is we are to be people of faith.

People of faith. We are to be people who believe God, like what we confessed this morning in the Nicene Creed. And we are to seek to be governed by the scriptures, making use of the sacraments, while believing that the Holy Spirit is truly making Christ known, making Christ present to us, even in our hurt and pain, and especially in our hurt and pain.

Yes, oftentimes we do feel isolated. We feel alone. Oftentimes we feel as though no one cares. And quite frankly, they may not. But faith compels us to continue to move forward, believing that God is still at work, even in the perceived silence, and that he will lead and guide us into all truth.

He will make good on his promise, like he did with Abraham, to bring us out of the wilderness, to take us through the tough times, and bring us into the promised land.

[5 : 55] Because that's exactly what he has done through the waters of holy baptism. And one day our faith will be made visible as we enter into that great fraternity of heaven with all the saints that have gone before us.

And at that time, there will no longer be anxiety, confusion, loneliness. At that time, we know that God will make all things, all things new.

And he has started that even now. The knowledge of what God is doing, however, might never be fully revealed in this life on this side of eternity.

Abraham did not see, nor did he experience, the fullness and the complete fulfillment of the covenant or the promise made in his own lifetime.

But what we are guaranteed, what Jesus talks about in our gospel text this morning from John chapter 16, is that the Holy Spirit is accomplishing his purpose in our lives.

[7 : 11] And that as we submit ourselves to God in faith, he will lead, he will guide us through the barren wilderness. He is leading us in the difficult times.

He's leading us in the struggles of life. And one day, all that pain and all that suffering and all that silence will make sense.

Our calling then is to be people of faith, trusting, trusting in the word of God and what he has said. We are called to follow our Lord even in the midst of the silence because the comforter cares for us. He is making Jesus known even in the depths of the valley of the shadow of death. As our collect of the day states and as we pray, grant unto thy people that they may love the thing which thou commandest and desire that which thou dost promise that so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.