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**Pentecost 26 B – Christ the King - Nov. 21, 2021**

**“God Will Provide”**

**Read: Genesis 22: 1 - 14 /Memorize: Genesis 22: 14**

Eight weeks ago I stood before you to announce that we were launching a ministry campaign. It would be a big, hairy, audacious goal to recommit ourselves to the ministry that God has called us to. One of the results of that goal would be that we would be able to fund the areas of ministry that we felt God calling us to do: mission, professional staff expansion and care of our property. When we added up numbers the total we would need over 3 years is \$550,000.

We knew we could not do this on our own. We would need God’s help. He had called us to be disciples making disciple. To accomplish that we would need prayer, dedication, commitment, and sacrifice. Without those we would fail. This was to be our test, just as Abraham faced a test a long time ago.

Like Abraham, this was not a test to produce faith but to reveal faith. God had been working on Abraham for a years. He built him up incident by incident to experience the fullness of God’s grace, majesty and glory. God had put him to the test before to help him see that God would provide. What was needed from Abraham was the willingness to trust that God would provide.

Now came the big moment. Abraham had seen the blessings of God, now he would understand why he was blessed. Abraham had had to surrender many things to God. Among them was that first born son, Ishmael, the son of Hagar, who was not the child of promise. He was born out of Sarah and Abraham’s desire and impatience to fulfill God’s promise their way. We know that didn’t work out well.

In Genesis 21 God commands Abraham to send Ishmael away. It pained Abraham greatly, but God promised He would provide for him also. Now would come the big test.

God called him, "Abraham!" Abraham replied, "Here I am." I'm sure he was expecting some wonderful gift from God, instead here's what God said, "Now take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offering him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

In these first two verses we hear several things that are vital to our story. Abraham's response, "Here I am," was saying to God that he was ready to be taught, to obey, to surrender and to be examined by God. I suspect the next words that he heard were like putting a knife in his heart. "Now take your son, Your only son, Whom you love, Offer him, As a burnt offering."

All the neighbors around them sacrificed children. But Abraham was different. He was in a covenant relationship with God, a God who promised him that this child would be the seed of a great nation. God was asking the impossible of Abraham, yet Abraham obeyed.

Here was the lesson God wanted Abraham to learn: Abraham needed to learn the difference between trusting the promise and trusting the promiser. God wants us to trust the promiser no matter what is happening in our lives and let Him take care of the promise.

In obedience, Abraham took all the steps God told him to take. He, Isaac and the servants went towards the land of Moriah. When the mountain came into view, Abraham told the servants to wait. He said, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." Then they set out for the mountain.

Isaac knew something was different. He was carrying the wood for the sacrifice but there was no sacrificial animal. When asked, Abraham could only assure him, "God would provide." When they got up on the mountain they built the altar together, then Abraham told Isaac what was going to do and Isaac submitted to it. It was only at the point where Abraham was ready to plunge the knife that God stopped him.

Now God knew that He was truly feared by Abraham because he held nothing back, not even his only son. Abraham revealed the faith God had been feeding into him for years. Because of His obedience, God counted it as if he had completed the action and so provided the sacrifice.

**What do we learn from Abraham? So often people say that if they could only understand then they could accept what happened. Abraham's obedience showed that he trusted God even when he did not understand. When we're asking God for understanding, we're actually asking Him to justify Himself to us.**

**We can be certain this was not what Abraham wanted to do. This was his only son, the son who was to be the seed of nation that God had promised Abraham that he would have. So Abraham had to trust that if God had him kill Isaac, God would somehow bring him back to life. Isn't that what he was revealing to the servants when he told them that they would be coming back after they worshiped God? By this story, we are reminded that God uses every experience in our lives to help train us up for the person we are to become in Him.**

**But the Abraham story actually foreshadows a bigger sacrifice. God offered himself through His Son as a sacrifice for us. He withheld nothing so that we could be His people. Like Isaac, Jesus carried the wood for the sacrifice and permitted Himself to be placed upon the cross to atone for the sins of the whole world. God had promised that He would save everybody; Jesus trusted the promiser to be faithful.**

**Mount Moriah was where the temple would be built centuries later; where Jesus would be sacrificed. It was here that we would see the provision of God in all its fullness. We remember this as we come to the table of our Lord Jesus Christ that strengthens us in faith towards Him and love towards one another.**

**We also have seen God's provision. As our leaders gathered on Nov. 10, they recommitted themselves to the mission and ministry of Good Shepherd. To a person they want to follow, obediently, the covenant that establishes our relationship to God.**

**Like all of us, they may not always understand but they have placed their trust in the provider. In response to His call they have committed themselves to prayer, dedicated themselves to His mission and made their commitments of time, talent and treasure. They offer their sacrificial gifts to help us accomplish the mission God has placed before us.**

I'm sure as we've gone through these two months, you may have wondered at times, just as I have, could we possibly accomplish this? One thing is certain: Without God we could not. With God, all things are possible. We gather today to recommit ourselves to the covenant promises that have been made. Knowing that, by trusting the promiser, we shall see His miracles among us.

God will use us in ways that we cannot begin to imagine. As we recommit ourselves, trusting that God will provide, we can give freely of our time, talents and treasure. You've heard the response of our leaders. Not only their time and talent, but over \$400,000 of their treasure to be used to the glory of God. They invite us now to join with them. The task is not yet complete. It needs all of us, under God's power, to accomplish what has been begun.

Is \$550,000 or any amount of money the goal? No. The goal is that we be obedient to God. We trust that God will provide exactly what we need to accomplish what He has called us to do. I invite you to join me in taking that step to trust God. As we check each box on our commitment card, we are placing our trust in Him as the provider. It is only when we trust God to provide that we will be able to accomplish all that He has called us to do through faith in Jesus Christ alone!