

### “The Lord Will Provide”

*“So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The Lord will provide’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided’” Genesis 22:14.*

"Father Abraham had many sons / Many sons had Father Abraham / I am one of them and so are you / So let's all praise the Lord!" You may recognize this song from your past experiences in church and Sunday School. Today, I bring this song up from your memory banks to this present moment because it serves as a reminder of the promise that was almost thwarted in our first reading this weekend. As we hear this reading from Genesis 22, we become acutely aware that this song, even more so this promise, was very close to not being true.

The promise that this simple song shares was that God told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. Even more specifically, we learn in the Bible that God had shared that Isaac was the one through whom these many nations would come. Later on, the apostle Paul would share in his writings that Abraham not only saw this promise fulfilled through the numerous people of Israel who shared Abraham's bloodlines but also in the numerous people of faith who shared Abraham's Savior, Jesus Christ. Hence, the song's praise to the Lord that you and I, as believers in Jesus, are also children of Abraham.

Hindsight makes this promise much clearer. Hindsight makes this whole Abraham account much more understandable. But Abraham didn't have the luxury of hindsight. He had to go through the intensity and gravity of the moments leading up to the fulfillment of this promise. Yes, He had heard the Lord's promise but he also had to endure waiting for the Lord to fulfill this promise on His own time and in His own way. In fact, Abraham's entire relationship with the Lord involved waiting.

One of the clearest expressions of Abraham's faith during this waiting comes in a phrase we hear in our reading today. Answering his son's question about the missing sacrifice, Abraham shared this statement, **“God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son. (Genesis 22:8)”** Then after the Lord provided the ram as a substitute for Isaac, Abraham doubles down on this expression of his faith labeling that location of sacrifice, **“The Lord will provide” (Genesis 22:14).**

Among the many questions and concerns that this account raises for us, we can't overlook this stunning walk of faith Abraham embarked upon. He heeds the Lord's words until he is redirected at the last moment by the angel of the Lord. This allegiance is shocking and especially to us in this day and age, we might even call it crazy or unreasonable. Yet, Abraham trusted that the Lord would provide. Abraham trusted the Lord to keep His promise even in the face of instructions and circumstances that appeared to be leading to the destruction of the very promise the Lord had only recently begun to fulfill. And in the end, the Lord confirmed that Abraham's faith wasn't misplaced or misguided.

Now, let me be clear, the words I've just shared with you aren't to lead you to the judgement that Abraham is some sort of crazy, insane, super believer – way out of our league. No, these words are for you to understand to what Abraham's journey of faith was leading. Today, like any other weekend at Emmanuel, the goal isn't for you to leave here focused on Abraham and his works of faith over and above God and His work of enduring faith in Abraham's life. Our reading from Genesis 22 truly is a great moment for us to witness the growth of faith God can and does work in people.

In the book of Genesis, we're first introduced to Abraham in chapter 12. Abraham is 75 years old and this is when the Lord calls Abraham into His service with the promise that he will be a great nation and blessing to all those around him. We could even summarize the details of the Lord's promise by pointing back to our earlier statement, the Lord was going to provide for Abraham and through Abraham for the rest of the world. And it's this promise of the Lord that created faith in Abraham and in this God-given faith, Abraham followed the Lord's commands for his life.

However, it wasn't long before Abraham's trust that the Lord would provide for him was shaken. In the latter half of Genesis 12, yes, the very same chapter we hear the Lord's promise to Abraham, Abraham grows concerned for his own wellbeing. Abraham is so concerned that he will be killed in Egypt because his wife, Sarah, is very beautiful, that he asks her to lie about her relationship to him. Abraham's trust that the Lord would provide him a future family was shaken by his fear for his own life in that present moment and so

Abraham acted on his own to protect himself apart from the Lord. However, the outcome of this situation was that the Lord still had to step in to protect the promise that Abraham's fearful actions had put in jeopardy.

Then 10 years after this experience, we are told about another moment where Abraham's faith in the Lord's provision was shaken. In Genesis 15 and 16, Abraham had recently heard the Lord reaffirm His promise to give him an heir and numerous offspring. Yet, the Lord's timing for the fulfillment of this promise wasn't happening on the schedule Abraham and his wife, Sarah, had in mind. Once again, Abraham attempted to help the Lord provide by taking things into his own hands.

At Sarah's urging, he has a child through his wife's servant, Hagar. Their child was named Ishmael. While the Lord would promise to bless Ishmael, He was clear with Abraham that this wasn't the way He was going to provide for fulfillment for the promise He had made to him. And so, after another 15 years passed, the Lord fulfilled his promise to Abraham as his wife, Sarah, gave birth to their son Isaac.

This brings us back to our reading from Genesis 22. After 25+ years of struggling to trust the Lord, and as we just discussed, moments of clearly failing to trust the Lord, Abraham is asked to go and sacrifice his promised son from the Lord, Isaac. But unlike his previous track record of trying to assist or take into his own hands the method and means for the Lord's provision, Abraham moved forward in faith that the Lord would provide in His own way and on His own time. And so, with the ram as substitute, the Lord provided.

The Lord will provide. Abraham didn't come to this expression of faith on his own. Neither did he come to this expression of faith overnight. The same Lord who provided fulfillment to the promise, also provided the faith and strengthening of this faith in Abraham to hold onto this promise even in the face of things that made it look like the Lord was going back on His promise. The Lord led Abraham to trust that the Lord didn't need his help to provide but would do so according to His own perfect plan.

The Lord will provide. This remains true for us today. However, like Abraham, we too struggle to believe and trust this reality throughout our journeys of faith. Like Abraham, we too fail to trust the Lord's plan and instead trust our own plans attempting to help the Lord out. Fear easily shakes our faith and instead of clinging to the Lord as our firm foundation, we are much more comfortable hiding behind our sin and shame. And when our faith is tested, we so often look inward trying to face those moments alone without the Lord's aid and counsel.

Despite our struggles and failings, the Lord doesn't give up on us! Just like He didn't give up on Abraham, He continues to forgive our shortcomings and renew and strengthen our faith in Him. He continues to provide. He provides His promises that create and sustain faith. He provides salvation so that all who trust in Him will have an eternal future with Him. He provides hope and assurance that He is the loving and caring God we need even now in this present moment.

All this – faith, forgiveness, salvation, hope and assurance – God provides through the life, death and resurrection of His very own Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. We can rest at peace knowing that our God has never again asked for the life of anyone's child but instead sent His own Son as the substitute for all of us. In Jesus, we know that we have a gracious and caring God from whom all good blessings flow in this life and in the life to come. In Jesus, we know our relationship with God is restored and our future is secure. In Jesus, we know that we have hope and assurance even when our circumstances seem to suggest otherwise.

And so, this weekend, dear friends in Christ, we stand united in this promise, the Lord, our Lord, will provide. As things get rocky and shaky around and in us, we cling to this promise. We point each other to this promise. We stand side by side reminding each other of the Lord's faithful providing in the past which calms our present concerns and future worries. We proclaim through our words and deeds Jesus' life, death and resurrection so that others may know that our God is trustworthy to provide. The Lord has provided, is providing and will provide. May the Holy Spirit grant us the strength of faith to trust this promise day after day until He returns. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan