

God has a Name – Jehovah Jireh

6/16/24

Genesis 22:1-19

Sunday AM

My favorite sport growing up was baseball. Sadly though, I grew up in Atlanta when the Braves were perennial cellar-dwellers. They were so bad, we'd take paper bags to the games to put over our heads for fear someone might see us. Yet despite how bad the Braves were at the time, one of my fondest memories came during a Braves/Expos game on May 17, 1977. The Braves were down 3 runs in the bottom of the 9th when Biff Pocoroba (*gotta love the name Biff*) came to the plate w/ the bases loaded and 2 outs. As the count ran full, the pitcher grooved a FB and he jacked it! A game-winning, walk-off, grand slam!

Have you ever found yourself in a “bottom of the 9th base-loaded, game-on-the-line moment when all the pressure is placed on you to deliver? This was the case for Abe in **Genesis 22** when God asked him to lay Isaac on the altar – and when God showed up as our Jehovah Jireh – the God who provides.

To remind you – after 24 yrs of fatherless father's days, God had finally blessed Abe w/ a promised son – the son who was to be the cornerstone of God's promise to make Abe a great nation. Yet as Isaac reached his teen yrs, God pulled a fast one on Abe and asked him to do the unfathomable – offer his one/only son Isaac as a sacrifice to God. What would you have done if you'd been in Abe's sandals?

LBH – I can tell you what Abe did – he trusted God and immediately did as God required of him. Was it easy? My guess is NO – yet he did it b/c he believed God would provide.

If you're keeping score at home, this story is about (2) important Biblical truths. (1) The story of Abe/Isaac is a foreshadowing of what God the Father would do for all of humanity in offering Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins. And (2), it's about God making sure we have nothing on the throne of our lives in place of Him. It's about how God longs to bless us w/ **Isaacs** in our lives, but if we start to love our **Isaacs** more than we love Him, then our **Isaacs** will need to be sacrificed so that we have no other gods before Him.

*Sometime later, God tested Abe. He said, “Abe!” and Abe replied, “Here I am.” God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” Early the next day, Abe got up and loaded his donkey. He took w/ him two of his servants and Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the 3rd day, Abe looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, “Stay here while I and the boy go over there. **We will worship and then we will come back to you.**” Abe took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and asked, “Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abe replied. “The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abe said, “**God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.**” And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abe built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of YHWH called out to him from heaven, “Abe ! Abe !” “Here I am,” he replied. “Do not lay a hand on the boy. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, b/c you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” Abe looked up and there in a thicket, he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So, Abe called that place **YHWH Will Provide**. To this day it is said, “On the mountain of YHWH, it will be provided.” The angel of YHWH called to Abe from heaven a 2nd time and said, “I swear by myself that b/c you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and thru your offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed, b/c you have obeyed me.” Genesis 22:1-18*

WOW! Let's take a minute to learn what it means that God is our Jehovah Jireh.

I The **REQUEST** (*Sacrifice*) v. 1-2

By this time Isaac is about 15 and God comes to Abe said – *Take your son, your only son, Isaac, the one you love, and sacrifice him.*

The immediate question is WHY? Why did God ask this of Abe? To **TEST** him. *God tested Abe to qualify his faith thru a thorough examination* – and He does the same for us. God will test us to strengthen and approve us – to make sure that our faith is genuinely engaged and aligned under His authority/care.

Consider it all joy, when you encounter various trials and testing knowing the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:3-4

trials (*peirasmos*) – to authenticate by fire – to assay. Assaying is the process of determining the value and strength of a precious metal by putting it to fire to burn off and sift away all impurities.

So, a trial is any challenge given or allowed by God to mature/build our relationship w/ Him. Its purpose is to approve the validity of our faith to ensure that we're rightly aligned under God – dependent on Him.

Question – why do teachers give tests in school?

It's to assay or sift a student's knowledge to ensure that they know the material. For example, my daughter Abi is about to take a huge exam as she enters her 4th yr of med school – to confirm that she knows and is equipped to practice medicine. NOW – aren't we all glad doctors are tested before they're allowed to practice? Why? *B/c tests are intended to reveal that we're aligned w/ the truth to bring out the best in us.*

God allows trials to clarify/strengthen our faith to bring out the best in us and to align us w/ His will so that nothing can hinder our walk w/ Him.

WHY? B/c our default fleshly tendencies are to slide away from under God's care/will to align ourselves w/ our ambitions/appetites. This is often quite subtle – w/ us not realizing that we've unplugged from God to plug into our wants/wishes.

In **Genesis 22** – God is testing Abe to make sure He was the one/only God in Abe's life – and to test it... God addressed the one thing in this world most dear to Abe to make sure it wasn't more important than God.

- **TAKE** your son who you love w/ all of your heart.
- **GO** to the land of Moriah
- **SACRIFICE** him on an alter to me

There's always a cost in following God. If it costs God the death of His son, then there will be a cost to us too – b/c fellowship requires total surrender/commitment.

It reminds me of the story of the chicken and the pig who got together to plan a birthday for their farmer. The chicken suggested a hearty breakfast of eggs and bacon, but the pig objected. He said that might sound good to you b/c you only have to make an offering, but for me, it'll require a complete sacrifice.

In this story, God offered Abe a trial to test his faith. And notice, God didn't give him an **explanation** – just an **expectation** – and He often does the same to us. Notice how Abe responded – w/ *immediate obedience*.

II The **RESPONSE** (Obedience) v. 3

Reality – we all respond to difficulties/challenges in 1 of 4 ways – *cave, complain, consult, or comply?*

Abe complied. He didn't procrastinate, hesitate, bellyache, or consternate – he got moving. He got up, saddled his donkey, and headed off to Moriah. *He put feet to faith.* After 24 yrs of walking w/ God, Abe understood that delayed obedience is disobedience.

- He got up early and saddled his donkey
- Cut wood for the offering and got moving

When it comes to obedience I fear that we often get our “buts” in the wrong place. We say, “God I'd be willing to obey you BUT, my circumstances/wants won't let me.” Yet, that's the wrong way of looking at life. We should say, “Lord, I realize what my wants are, BUT I believe You can/will provide/satisfy.”

Being a pastor, I've heard some of the most ridiculous excuses why people can't obey God whether it's as simple as going to church or serving in the mission.

What I've learned is that most people aren't offering excuses to justify their actions before men, or to save hurting someone's feelings – they offer excuses to convince themselves that their disobedience towards God is okay – but it's NOT!

What we learn in this story is that faith/obedience go hand-in-hand. When we obey, we're expressing faith – and faith is belief in motion.

III The **RELIANCE** (Faith) v. 6-8

As the story continues, Abe, Isaac, and his servants make their way to Moriah. Along the way, there were (2) incredible moments of reliance exhibited by Abe.

The 1st occurs as they come into view of Mt. Moriah and Abe speaks to his servants.

Stay here while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.

Did you see it? WE will worship. WE will come back.

Abe knew in his heart of hearts that God was somehow going to provide. How? I don't know. Yet he knew God was up to something bigger than him.

The 2nd event occurred just a bit later when Isaac asks Abe about the sacrifice. He says – *God will provide.*

“Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abe replied. “The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abe said, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering...”

The reality of the moment hits as Isaac asks Abe about the sacrifice. Yet there's nothing to indicate that Abe was panicked in any way; in fact, it appears to be just the opposite. *He had peace that God would provide.*

provide (*ra'ah – Jireh*) to see beforehand – God sees before and makes a provision.

This isn't rocket science – God promised Abe years earlier that He was going to give him a son (Isaac) from whom He was going to make a great nation. So, while Abe didn't know the details, He believed God was going to be faithful to His promise – after all, God had never failed him before.

By faith, Abe, at the time of testing, offered Isaac back to God. Acting in faith, he was as ready to return the promised son, his only son, as he had been to receive him – and this after he had already been told, "Your descendants shall come from Isaac." Abe figured that if God wanted to, he could raise the dead. In a sense, that's what happened when he received Isaac back, alive from off the altar. Hebrews 11:17

Truth – Abe chose to believe God's promises over his current circumstances.

SEE – Faith believes that nothing is impossible w/ God. It trusts that God will be present/faithful to His promises. Faith is always willing to trust God w/ the things we value the most in life.

But it doesn't stop there. As Abe gets to the top of Moriah, he proceeds w/ his business. The moment of truth has arrived – it's put up or shut up time... and Abe w/out pause, he builds an altar, binds His son, lays Isaac on the altar, and rears back the knife.

It's as if Abe is now testing God! God, you said you'd be there and take care of me. You said you'd make me a great nation thru Isaac – well then – let's see how you are going to provide to keep your promise.

MAYBE – this is what faith is – testing God to see if He will provide as He's promised. So believing that God is and will that we throw all of our hope on Him.

Truth – our circumstances never test God's credibility or faithfulness, but they do test our understanding/trust in the character/purpose of God in our lives.

IV The **RESCUE** (*Provision*) v. 11-14

The angel of the Lord shows up just in time, and God provides a ram in the thicket as a substitute sacrifice.

Has it ever occurred to you that nothing ever occurs to God? He *knows* all, *sees* all, is *aware* of all, and *cares* for all – He loves to meet us at the point of our need.

WHY? It's b/c in every situation/circumstance of our lives, God is always doing so many different things we can't see, don't know, and can't begin to expect – b/c He's always up to more than just our lives.

So, don't miss the obvious. Not only was God testing Abe's faith, but He was showing us a picture of what He would later do for you/me – He offered His one and only Son as a perfect propitiation for our sin. When we were dead in our sins, God stepped in thru Jesus to become sin for us by becoming our substitution.

God demonstrated His love for me and you, while we were sinners – Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

God demonstrated His love for Abe by providing a worthy sacrifice to spare His Son just as He provided a spotless lamb to rescue you/me from our sin.

IOW – Jehovah Jireh has provided for you/me too. Just as He provided a lamb in the thicket to rescue Isaac, He's also provided a lamb for us on an old rugged cross.

Our God has provided everything we need according to His riches in glory.