

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Grant Troutt
Series: Till He Appears
December 10, 2023

The Faithfulness of Abraham

Genesis 22 (ESV)

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “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 of which I shall tell you.” So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He 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, from me.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 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.” And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Harris Creek, how are we doing? It’s good to be with you guys this morning. My name is Grant, if we haven’t met yet. I get to serve here, at this body, on staff here, and it is just a privilege. My wife and I moved to Waco a little over a year ago, and it was a week after we’d gotten married. We really picked up our lives, and moved here to Waco, and started our family, and started our marriage on this property here at Harris Creek. I’m just so thankful. I want to say, “Thank you!” right off the bat for everybody in this church and the leadership here, because God has done so

much in my life through this year. I'm sure if you're married, you know that the first year of marriage is a lot of feels. You're learning a lot of new things for the first time, so thank you, Harris Creek, for everything you've been for me and my wife.

One of the biggest blessings for us is our "newly married" Life Group. Last Tuesday, we got together, and we're going through a book right now called *The Meaning of Marriage* by Timothy Keller. It's a phenomenal book. One of the chapters that really stuck out to us was on love languages. I don't know if you know this, but there's probably five or six love languages, and what it teaches you is that how you like to receive love is often how you like to extend love. It's really important in marriage that I realize I was not doing a good job on, and it reminded me about a conversation with my wife. If you've ever interacted with my wife, Madi, she can be stern. She has this passionate sternness to her, and I got the text that no husband wants to get. It said, "Can we talk?" No emojis, no nothing, just kind of a period. "Can we talk?" And I think, "Alright, what happened? What did I do?" I'm just going through my mind. I show up, and she looks at me with the sweetest face, and says, "Grant, I'm so thankful for all the notes you give me." At this point, my love language is words of affirmation, so I'm thinking, "Yes! Fill my tank! How good am I doing?" A little backstory: I love to write notes, and I feel like I can step into this Shakespeare, kind of Bruno Mars, "I'll catch a grenade, I'll step in front of the train..." I love it! I feel alive because I love to receive words; therefore, I love to give words. Madi looks at me and says, "I love your words. I love them, and I love how much you tell me you love me." And I'm kind of waiting for the 'but.' "Hey, I love that you say you trust me, but Grant, I hear that. I just want you to *show* me, though. I hear that you love me. I hear that you think I'm beautiful, but what would really demonstrate that is if you showed me with your action." For that first time period in marriage, I would tell her how much I loved her; all the while, the dishes and the trash weren't getting taken out or being done. She said, "Grant, the way that you would show me that I'm beautiful is if you would plan a date and ask me intentional questions." That was a pivotal moment in our marriage because I realized that what I'm saying is not confirmed by what I'm doing. I think a lot of us in this room tend to have a relationship with God that feels similar to that. "God, I love you! I love you so much! I trust you! I trust you with my life." It's almost like there's this moment where God wants to kneel down with us in His might and power, but His grace, and go, "I hear you, but would you show me that?" We're stepping into a story today looking at the life of Abraham, and there's going to be a moment almost where God looks at Abraham and says, "I hear what you said. But today, I'm going to ask you to demonstrate that love through action."

We're going to be in Genesis 22 today, and we're making our way through the series, "Till He Appears." What's so beautiful about this series is that I used to think the Old Testament was just a random collection of 39 books that had nothing to do with me. In 2018, Jesus radically changed my life. I was drinking and smoking, and I actually went to jail for a night, and then Jesus changed everything about my life. But I thought that my life and the Bible started in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, when Jesus appeared. It wasn't until 2020, when I was doing a program called the Watermark Institute, that I just began to learn the Word. What I learned is that everything in the Old Testament is actually connected to and setting up the New Testament. So, everything in the Old actually holds hands with the New. I remember asking, "What are these stories?" The beautiful thing about this series is that what we're unpacking and unveiling in these characters, in these moments in the Old Testament, are actually all pointing to a coming Savior,

Jesus Christ. As you read the Old Testament, Jesus said, “All of that that Moses, the prophets, and the poets wrote, it’s all pointing to me.” Jesus said that, and what we’re going to look at today is a story about Abraham and Isaac. We’re going to be talking about the faithfulness of Abraham and how he responded to the call of God. In this passage, we’re going to see the test of Abraham, Abraham’s response to the test, and ultimately, the greater provision God offers Abraham.

Before we jump in, I’d like to give a recap of where we are. Genesis 12 is right after the Tower of Babel. Genesis 12 is where God chooses a man named Abram. God chooses him, and he institutes a covenant with Abraham. He says, “Abraham, I am going to make you the father of my people, Israel.” The covenant has three parts: land, seed, and blessing. He says, “Abraham, I’m going to give you the Promised Land. I’m going to give you more descendants than the grains of sand on the seashore. I’m going to bless all those who bless you and curse all those that curse you.” That’s the Abrahamic Covenant. We see that all throughout the Old Testament and all throughout the New Testament, which Paul brings up back in Romans. In Genesis 15, God shows up to Abraham, and it’s been ten years, and He says, “Abraham, you’re going to have to son.” At this point, Abraham is 85 years old, and he thinks, “There’s no way.”

Let’s fast forward to chapter 21. God is faithful to His promise, and Isaac is born with Sarah. So, here we have this story, where God has already shown Himself faithful to Abraham and flip the chapter to chapter 22. We’ll start in Verse 1: **After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “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 of which I shall tell you.** Can you imagine? This man waited 100 years for a son. God promised that his son would be the leader of the descendants of Israel. Through this son would be the promise, and right here, right now, God says, “I know you waited. I want you to take him up a mountain. I want you to kill him. I want you to offer him to me.” What would you be feeling if you’re Abraham? But we have the upper hand on Abraham in this one sense. While Abraham is living and experiencing this, you and I are reading this. Notice in verse 1 what it says: **After these things God tested Abraham...** If you are going to follow Yahweh, follow God, your faith *will* be tested. Your faith *will* be tested, and some of you, right now, may be in a test that feels similar to this--where you’re saying, “God, I don’t know if I can do this. I don’t know if what you’re asking me right now, I don’t know if I can lay this down.” Point number one, for those who follow God ...

1. *Our faith will be tested.*

A test always does two things. A test will always reveal what you truly know. So, college students in the room, if you’ve ever taken a test, a test will reveal, “Did I study or did I not?” A test will reveal, “Do I know this, or do I not?” If you get your blood tested, a test will reveal what’s truly inside of you. A test always reveals. A test also always refines. We’re stepping out of this series we just walked through for months which was the I Peter series, and we almost saw it on every page of the chapter: Your faith will be tested. As steel is tested and sharpened, as gold is tested and purified, so, believer, your faith will be tested. It says this in I Peter 4:12, **“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.”** It says this in James 1:2-3, **“Count it all joy, my**

brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” Abraham was being tested. Why? To reveal what he truly believed and to refine what he knew he believed. Why are we tested? Why would God test us? Because He wants to reveal what’s truly inside of us, and He wants to strengthen that faith. That’s what He does. That’s what God does.

So, at the core of this message, you can’t help but read this, and as we’re sitting here, we’re going, “So, what is my Isaac? God, what would you ask of me that would devastate me to give you?” What is that for you? Is that the reputation you’ve built up for so long that, if God asked you to give that over, you’d say, “I can’t.” Is that your child’s success? Is that the financial wealth that you’ve accumulated? What if He asked for all that? What would it be? As I wrote this message and prayed and thought about it, I think it sounds a little bit more like this than this big Isaac that God is asking for. I think it sounds like, “I want you to lay down your pride. I want you to finally call your dad and ask him for forgiveness.” We’re saying, “God, what’s my Isaac? Is it my company? Is it this relationship? God, what is it? I’ll give it to you!” We’re so good at those big things, and He says, “No, no, no. I just want you to lay down your time. I just want you to spend more time with your kids and tell them you’re proud of them.” “God, what is my Isaac? I’ll lay it down. I won’t ever do it again.” “I just want you to respect your husband.” We’re really good at being faithful to God at the things He hasn’t asked of us, but all the while, we disregard Him and are unfaithful in the day-to-day moments that He’s asking us to be faithful in. For some of us in this room, the Isaac that God is asking of you right now, today, is to finally confess that sin that you’ve been hiding from your spouse for so long. Or confess that thing that the enemy has told you is if you say it, people will back away from you, and he is having a heyday in your life. What is God is saying, “Today is the day that I want you to give that to Me.” God tests our faith, not because He wants to hurt us, but because He wants to strengthen our faith in Him.

I remember basketball being such an idol in my life, and when I was six years old, I told my dad, “All I want to do when I get older is play college basketball.” It really took on a life of its own. I would travel around the country and work hard every day, just to be a basketball player. I didn’t know it at the time, but it was completely who I was. Growing up, in high school I had a lot of injuries, so I sat out for six years straight with four back-to-back-to-back surgeries. At that time, I remember my heart getting hardened to God. “God, if you loved me, you would let me play.” Finally, I made it to college at UC Santa Barbara. I’m playing basketball and my dorm is on the beach. I’m not following Jesus, although I grew up in church, and I just remember this moment when the doctor came to me and said, “Hey, we did an MRI of your hip and you’re bone-on-bone in your hip. You’re chipping away bone every time you cut and every time you move. If you ever want to walk or play with your kids when you’re older, you’re done with basketball forever. Tonight.” I remember going home to my dorm, and it was about this time when I started watching a ministry online. I felt God calling me, but I wasn’t ready yet. I went home, and it was like the Lord was simply going, “Grant, will you lay down basketball? Will you lay down *that* for me?” That was the one thing I was like, “God, you cannot have that. You cannot have that.”

But God doesn’t ask something of you to hurt you. He asks something of you to bless you for His glory and the good of others. I don’t know what that is for you right now. I don’t know if you’ve had that moment, but how do we prepare our hearts to be able to walk in obedience if God asks something of us? You posture your heart like Abraham and you respond with three

words, “Here I am.” When God called Abraham in Verse 1, He said, **“Abraham.”** He said, **“Here I am.”** That word in the Greek is ‘Hineni.’ It means ‘certainly,’ or ‘surely.’ So, when God called Abraham, **“Abraham.”** He said, **“Certainly.”** **“Abraham.”** **“Surely.”** Why? Why could Abraham be so sure about that? Because Abraham had seen in Genesis 12, when God asked him to leave all of his family, all of his friends, all of his father’s blessing, and he went to where God called him to, God was faithful there. God was with him there. In chapter 21, Abraham was 100 years old and he had a miracle child. God showed up for Abraham, so now in 22, when God says, **“Abraham.”** He says, **“Certainly.”** I just want to ask; do we have a “Here I am” posture when God calls our name? Do we have “Here I am” Christians that, when God calls us, we go, **“Certainly.”** (*Grant raises his hand.*) I don’t know what it is, and it may sound really, really scary, but as I look back, you have never failed me yet. You have never failed me yet. What is that for you in your life right now? What would God ask of you? And I just want to ask, do we have available Christians? Do we have “Here I am” Christians? Your faith will be tested to reveal and refine what you believe about God.

Let’s keep reading. Verse 3, **“So (after that ask, that crazy ask) Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac (who’s got to be questioning everything) said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.”** How do I know if I have faith? How do I quantify if I have faith? Have you ever wondered that? Ever asked yourself, how do you know if you have faith? I can tell you. You can know if you have faith when you look at your feet, because faith is always followed by footsteps. Faith is always confirmed by movement. Faith is never stagnant. Verse 3: **“So Abraham rose.”** He took his son, Isaac, took the two on a donkey, and he went. Faith is confirmed by action, which is point number two:

2. Faith in God is followed by obedience to God.

Jesus makes this clear in John 14:15: **“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”** “If you love me, you will obey me.” And a lot of us are really, really good at, “I love you. I love you. I love you.” Jesus says, “If you do, then your life will reflect that you do.” So, what does our fruit look like? How are we obeying what God has called us to walk in? What is your faithful step? Is it to write a note during the holidays to every family member to encourage them with a verse? I know that would be super weird for a lot of us and our families. What’s that small step? I think when we ask, “God, what’s my Isaac?” He says, “Why didn’t you share the Gospel with your server at dinner last night? I’m not asking *that* right now, I just want you, when you walk in HEB to actually obey the nudge you feel when I say, ‘Go tell them about me.’”

Faith in God is followed by obedience to God. If you want to know if you love God, there is a simple litmus test: Do you obey Him? What does our alcohol consumption look like? How is our sexual purity? How are we obeying Him? And by the way--He's not a *mad* God, He's a *good* God. To remind everybody this morning of His character: slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. I don't know what you're in here with. I don't know if it's your first time in church in a long time. God is not a god that has George Washington hair, with a judge, saying, "I'm waiting for you to mess up!" He is a loving Father that bends down with a twinkle in His eyes and says, "I'm here. Would you come to me? I know what's best for you. I'm not going to ask you to do something to hurt you." So, why are we so afraid of hearing what God wants to ask of us? Because we do not trust His character. If you're Abraham in this moment, and God says, "I need you to go kill your son," if you don't trust God's character, there's no way you'll obey Him. When we are asked to do something that feels scary, we have got to draw upon the character of God. When it makes no sense: "I know that You are good and that You work all things for the good of those who love You." So, in your moment, in your situation right now, draw upon his character, and you remember, you remember what He's done for you. He will always provide for His children.

Abraham knew God would because he knew God could. There's a recent story I heard about members of this body here at Harris Creek. We were all together as a staff, and one of our co-workers was telling the story of helping out with Passion of God, which is a ministry all about explaining God's heart for the nations. One of the application steps was that there are many international students that come over and live in Waco. One of the needs that we can actually offer is to house them. You have this empty nester couple is wanting to learn more about God's heart for the nations, and there's an email sent out right after the class. It said, "Hey, guys, this is a long shot, but there's a girl from Italy that was planning on moving here, and her host home actually fell through. She has nowhere to stay." This couple responded, the first ones to the email, and they just said, "Hey, we've got an open room. We can do it." My friend was telling the story, and he said, "Are you sure? It's not just a few months, it's actually through the summer. It's a while." They say, "No question. We've got it. We're in." My friend said, "So I finally called them. 'Why are you so in? How could you be so ready?'" They said, "If we're going to read about it, if we're going to pray about it, we want to be about it. We don't want our faith just to have a mouthpiece, but to have legs." Our faith is confirmed by obedience, and that encourages me. That's a "here I am" Christian. (*Grant raises his hand.*) "I'm available, and I'm ready to follow." And guess what? A "here I am" Christian is never allowed to stay comfortable. That's what's so hard about America. That's what's so hard about Christianity. We just love to stay comfortable. We want to follow God the best way we can, while staying the most comfortable we can, and God says they cannot co-exist. "If you want to follow Me," Jesus says, "you will deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me." A "here I am" Christian is never allowed to stay comfortable, but it is always worth it, because here's the thing: We are either living for this world or the next. If we are living for this world, I am the biggest fool in this room, up here on the stage. If this is it. If we are living for this world, but if we're living for the next, He is worth it. He is worth it to get uncomfortable, because He loves us. Are you storing up treasure for yourself here or in heaven? Faith in God is followed by obedience to God.

So, a lot of us are hearing this. "Grant, that's great, but I can't get past why God would ask him to kill his son? What? It just doesn't sit right with me." Let's keep reading. Let's see what God

does. **“When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, you see this response, “Here I am.” He 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, from me.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, “The Lord will provide”; Jehovah Jireh, as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”** Do you see what God does? Do you see what God did for Abraham? This story is not about Abraham’s faithfulness to God. It is about God’s faithfulness to Abraham and to you and to me, because this story actually is not pointing to the ram. It’s actually all pointing to Jesus Christ. Everything about this story is pointing us to what we’re about to celebrate in a couple of weeks: the coming Savior, the Lamb that was to be sacrificed for our sins. Look at this:

Isaac was born as a miracle child-
- Genesis 21:2

Isaac was the one and only son,
whom Abraham loved – Genesis 22:2

Isaac rode in on a donkey to be
sacrificed – Genesis 22:3

Isaac carried the wood for his sacrifice up
the mountain – Genesis 22:6

Silent ram caught in a thicket of thorns
wrapped around its head
- Genesis 22:13

Jesus miracle child conceived by the
Holy Spirit – Luke 1:35

Jesus was the one and only Son,
whom the Father loved – John 3:16

Jesus rode in on a donkey to
Jerusalem to be sacrificed – Luke 19:35-37

Jesus carried the wooden cross for His
sacrifice up the mountain – John 19:17

Jesus was the innocent Lamb who wore
a crown of thorns around his head –
- John 1:29, John 19:2

Right before Abraham slaughters his son, God looks at him, he looks up, and there is a silent ram caught in a thicket of thorns around his head, waiting to be sacrificed. This is *all* about Jesus! This is all pointing to Jesus, and that’s what makes the Old Testament come to life, and that is why we celebrate Christmas. Because God didn’t say, “I want you to kill your son.” God said, “I will offer mine to be sacrificed.” For you and for me. God didn’t ask Abraham to kill his son, God gave His Son to be killed for the forgiveness of sins. If that’s not it, if that’s not enough to convince you this is about Jesus, two thousand years later, on that same mountain range, Jesus would be lifted up on a cross, on the mountain, Jehovah Jireh, and be crucified for you and for me. That is what He does for us! That is who He is!

If you don’t know that Jesus, you have not started to live yet. I was dead, and now I’m alive. I don’t know how else to explain it. My friends will come to me and say, “Grant, what happened

to you? Are you religious now? I heard you have a collar and stuff.” There’s just no category for what I’m doing right now, but I’ll say, “No, no, no. All I know--John 9:25--is that I was blind and now I see. I don’t know, but I encountered Jesus, and He changed everything!” Do you know Him? (*Grant points to his heart.*) A lot of us know Him (*points to his head*), but do you know Him (*points to his heart*)? Has He changed everything about your life? As we get near Christmas, it’s why we anticipate it--because we didn’t have to sacrifice ourselves. The innocent Lamb stepped in and said, “I will be the sacrifice.” Jesus came, while we were still sinners, while we were stuck in our innermost dark, secret sin, Jesus saw that moment. Think about your worst moment ever. He opens the door, He looks at you and sees you, and He says, “You are worth it, and as they nail my hands to this cross, as I bleed out, I’m going to hang on, so that you can let go. If that is true, if Jesus is true, if this book (*picks up a Bible*) is real, then I cannot operate in my life without telling everybody I come into contact with. The application of this is to one, posture our hearts, two, be obedient, but three, simply say, “Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus!” He’s so good to us.

So, in summary, what we see from this story, is:

1. *Our faith will be tested.*

If you’re in a test right now, how do we prepare our hearts to be obedient? We say, “Lord, I’m available.” I don’t know how it’s going to happen, but I’m available.”

2. *Faith in God is followed by obedience to God.*

What is your next step? What can we do, just like Abraham, when we don’t understand it? “I don’t know how God’s going to provide, but I know He’s going to because He’s good.”

3. *God faithfully provided for the sacrifice.*

To wrap up, in thinking about everything with my wife, she had this moment with me where she said, “Grant, will you show me? Will you show me?” I think there’s a lot of people in here that could be feeling like God is asking you to show Him you love Him, and that’s not the point of this message. The point of this message is that, while we’re sitting in here, and during the holiday season, it can also be a really hard time for a lot of people, God is saying, “I will show you, by my action, how much I love you.” How much are you worth? His very own Son. As we’re about to sing this song, I want you to have a moment with God. As we sing these words, He is showing you that He went and He took that step to show you He loved you. **“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son.”** Let me pray.

Father God, you are in every page of our Old Testament all pointing to your Son Jesus. Father, thank you for the Bible, that we get to read it, and we get to know it and love it. Father, I pray that it would change us. Lord, as we gear up for this holiday season, I pray that we would take a moment to recognize why we celebrate Christmas: because you sent your Son Jesus. Lord, I know that I have sinned so much against you, but you promised me that on that cross every ounce of it was paid for, so remind the person in the room that is questioning if they are forgiven, that they are forgiven indeed. That there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. Remind us

that you've given us authority over death, because you came. Jesus, thank you for the story of Abraham and Isaac to encourage our faith, but to also to point to the Lamb with the crown of thorns that said, "I will take your place." Jesus, move in our hearts. In Your name, amen.